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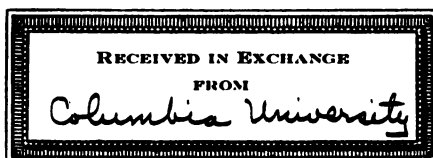
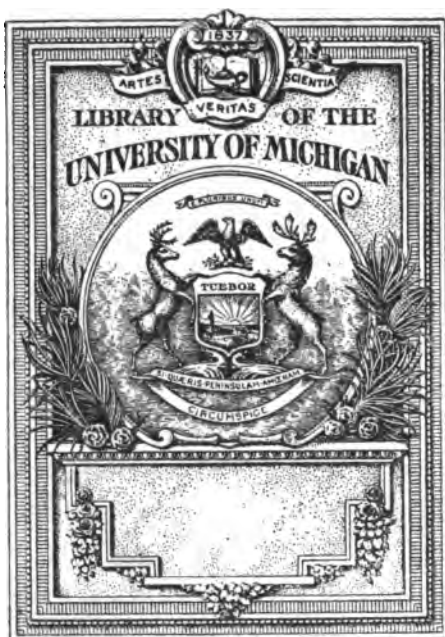
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STUDIES IN DIDEROT'S ESTHETIC NATURALISM

BY

FELIX VEXLER, A. M.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty
of Philosophy, Columbia University

NEW YORK

1922

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PREFACE

As intimated in the introductory chapter, this work is part of a larger one devoted to the study of Diderot's naturalism as exemplified in his general esthetic as well as to his theories concerning the arts of music, dancing, drama, acting, painting, sculpture and architecture.

The writer wishes to express his heartfelt thanks to Professor Dino Bigongiari without whose encouragement and advice this work would not have been written; to Professors Fernand Baldensperger and Anatole Le Braz, who guided him in the preliminary stages; to Professors Henri Chamard, Raymond Weeks, John Lawrence Gerig, Robert Herndon Fife, Charles Sears Baldwin, André Morize, to whom he is indebted for criticism or information. Professor Frank Wadleigh Chandler has read and improved an early redaction of the chapter on Acting and Historical Tragedy, while Professor Henry Alfred Todd has made certain helpful suggestions—*ad majorem auctoris gloriam*. Thanks are also due Miss Dollie Booth Hepburn, Mr. Frederic W. Erb and other members of the staff of Columbia University Library, who in various ways have facilitated the writer's access to the necessary books. With regard to books, even some of recent date were not obtainable, at least at this writing, for instance M. Joseph Texte's selections from Diderot, the Russian work on the French drama and eighteenth-century philosophy by A. Ivanov, etc. On the fly-leaf of Professor Hubert Gillot's *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (Paris, Champion, 1914), mention is made of another work of his, entitled *Un romantique au XVIIIe siècle. Denis Diderot. Essai sur son rôle et son influence littéraires* (Langres, 1913). Yet all efforts to procure this have remained fruitless.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In *De l'Interprétation de la Nature* Diderot expressed his conviction that a great scientific "revolution" was impending; the reign of mathematics was near its end; that of natural science was about to begin. And indeed, it cannot be gainsaid that during his lifetime rationalism yielded to naturalism to a considerable extent. To realize this one need only compare the leading ideas of Nature, Reason and Humanity as understood in the seventeenth and again in the eighteenth century. To begin with, Nature acquired transcendent importance as it came to be conceived "as endowed with autonomous power and reality surpassing the powers of the mind and tending to oppose God himself." The Cartesian notion that Nature is explained by a system of clear ideas was now attacked on every side. Hylozoists, materialists and spiritualists all united in holding that the relationships between things and phenomena are "not those imagined by the pure understanding left to itself; for now it is the intellect which is supposed to imagine, while experience yields truth." Instead of being thought of as "the faculty of immediately possessing notions or principles from which all certain knowledge must flow," Reason now became the faculty of "consulting experience and relying on it alone. So that the thing which above all was to be interpreted is Nature—by natural means and natural causes."¹ Humanity, too, no longer a passive substratum of pure reason, was regarded as a part of Nature, governed by laws which are not always and not wholly those of the intellect. The "*système de la nature*," of which Diderot was the most gifted as well as perhaps the most enthusiastic exponent, sprang from the conviction, shared by a group of radical "Philosophers" and "Encyclopedists," that observation and experiment had yielded sufficient data for the elaboration and practical application of a system of social physics based on natural laws, and therefore intolerant of every-

¹ Victor Delbos, *La philosophie française* (Paris, 1919), p. 190 f., 209 f.

thing that is artificial, arbitrary, inconsequent, as well as abnormal and harmful in social and intellectual life—a program which Diderot enounced as follows:

“La véritable manière de philosopher c’eût été et ce serait d’appliquer l’entendement à l’entendement; l’entendement et l’expérience aux sens; les sens à la nature; la nature à l’investigation des instruments; les instruments à la recherche et à la perfection des arts, qu’on jetterait au peuple pour lui apprendre à respecter la philosophie.”²

“Le but d’une Encyclopédie est de rassembler les connaissances éparses sur la surface de la terre, d’en exposer le système aux hommes avec qui nous vivons, et de le transmettre aux hommes qui viendront après nous; afin que les travaux des siècles passés n’aient pas été des travaux inutiles pour les siècles qui succéderont; que nos neveux, devenant plus instruits, deviennent en même temps plus vertueux et plus heureux; et que nous ne mourions pas sans avoir bien mérité du genre humain.”³

The scope of the *magna instauratio* planned by these philosophers extended even to the fine arts.⁴ The *grands classiques*, “*géomètres*” and “*beaux esprits*” who preceded “*les philosophes*” had upheld the notion that art was ancillary to reason and truth; that it must “paint” or “imitate nature” or “embellished nature.” To be sure, this the “*philosophes*” reaffirmed and loudly called for the “strict imitation of nature” and the observance in art of “truth,” which is of “all times and places.” Yet they also gave the doctrine of natural imitation a turn which was previously foreign to it, save perhaps in the mind of Fénelon. For whilst the “Nature” spoken of by the Classicists coincided with what Diderot calls “*le froid bon sens*” and “*pesante raison*,” that invoked by the “*philosophes*” was, as we saw, something different from pure “reason” and often imperious to it. The esthetic doctrine of “return to nature” which thanks to their efforts slowly encroached on that of reasonable natural imitation, is based on the conception of nature as some-

² *De l'interprétation de la nature* (1754), in his *Œuvres*, ed. Assézat and Tourneux, Vol. II, p. 19.

³ Article “*Encyclopédie*” (*Œuvres*, xiv, 415).

⁴ Cf. art. “*Encyclopédie*” (*Œuvres*, xiv, 474).

thing changeable, impulsive, impassioned and withal intolerant of "*les convenances*" and "*le modus*." Accordingly, "reason," hitherto considered as the chief esthetic organ, began to be subordinated to "genius," "imagination," "taste" or "sentiment." The preface which d'Alembert wrote for the *Encyclopédie* marks the official abandonment by the Encyclopedists of strict objectivism in esthetic and a step in the direction of expressionism and subjectivism, or Romanticism.

The studies of which we now offer a first series seek to establish the fact that Diderot strove to conciliate the old esthetic of Classicist or Academicist origin and the theoretical and practical consequences of the new "*système de la nature*". This reconciliation was not completely effected and Diderot's "metaphysic of art" remained dualistic. It certainly is not idealistic since its main concern is nature "as it is"; nor is it merely realistic since it looks upon nature as largely "contorted" and therefore an-esthetic. Rather is it ideo-realistic, inasmuch as it presupposes that the disparity between Art and Nature is to be overcome when the "natural estate" shall be actualized. The artist as conceived by Diderot is a sociological and Encyclopedic virtuoso, capable of conjuring up vivid representations of the conflict between the urgings of nature and the "miserable conventions" enforced by secular and religious despotism, and of preparing humanity for the salutary "revolution" that is to culminate in the great Utopia.

An impressionable mind like Diderot's was alive to all the opposing tendencies of a changing age. It is not strange, therefore, that his esthetic vacillates between subjectivism and objectivism, rationalism and emotionalism, realism and idealism, or, if you will, Classicism and Romanticism. This dismays critics who like clearcut and inflexible classifications. But it is not true (as it is hoped the quotations that constitute the substance of our studies will demonstrate), that Diderot's ideas are hopelessly inconsistent. As Karl Rosenkranz has said, for all his being undialectic, Diderot is not illogical.

To guard against the danger of introducing an artificial semblance of order in an author whose contradictoriness and

confusion are proverbial, each topic was studied by itself and was associated with other topics only when the example of Diderot authorized this. The esthetic of music, for instance, was studied in conjunction with that of lyric drama, dancing and pantomime, whilst acting was considered together with historic tragedy and painting with sculpture.⁵ Again, the realm of plastic arts was somewhat encroached upon when Diderot's conception of the dramatic poem was considered. It goes without saying that due (thought not superstitious) respect was paid to the chronology of Diderot's utterances. This method entails a considerable amount of repetition, but this very fact yields incontrovertible evidence of the congruity of Diderot's esthetic thought.

The writer does not for the present intend to go beyond a presentation of Diderot's ideas concerning artistic imitation of nature in drama and tragedy. He cheerfully refrains from sitting in judgment on an author who is still too "modern" to be regarded as "*classé*." The study of Diderot "as a career in time," as a center to which converged a world of esthetic thought and from which emanated another and better one, he is content to leave to a future work.

Unless otherwise specified, the references are to the volumes and pages of the Assézat and Tourneux edition of Diderot's works. Whenever necessary or useful to the argument, they are followed by the titles and dates of the particular works quoted.

⁵ The writer hopes to be able to publish his studies of Diderot's esthetic of the musical and plastic arts in the near future.

THE DRAMATIC POEM AND THE "DRAME"

I

THE NEW DRAMATIC SYSTEM

The vast scope of the dramatic changes sponsored by the leader of the Encyclopedic Party may be gauged by the program he outlined in 1757, in the *Troisième entretien sur le Fils naturel*:

"La tragédie domestique et bourgeoise à créer.

Le genre sérieux à perfectionner.

Les conditions de l'homme à substituer aux caractères, peut-être dans tous les genres.

La pantomime à lier étroitement avec l'action dramatique.

La scène à changer, et les tableaux à substituer aux coups de théâtre...

La tragédie réelle à introduire sur le théâtre lyrique.

Enfin, la danse à réduire et à séparer de tout autre art d'imitation" (vii, 161).

The most important innovation in this new "dramatic system" is the creation of "domestic tragedy" and the improvement of "serious comedy," two kindred prose *genres* dealing with home and professional life, preferably as exemplified in morally meritorious actions, with a view to inculcating "philosophic" reflexions and inducing emotional effects, adequate to the tribulations of the dramatic characters and the magnitude of the social issues at stake, and ranging from a sober state of mind analogous to that assumed in serious affairs ("*comédie sérieuse*," "*genre sérieux*") to pity and terror ("*tragédie domestique et bourgeoise*"). The sequel will add several details to this definition. For the present we shall quote, from the preface which Diderot wrote for Trudaine de Montigny's translation of Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson* (1762), a few lines which, in succinct form, contain the esthetic motivation of the two new dramatic kinds:

"... Enfin, il vient un homme de génie qui conçoit qu'il n'y a plus de ressource que dans l'infraction de ces bornes

étroites que l'habitude et la petitesse d'esprit ont mises à l'art. L'un dit: mais puisque les caractères sont épuisés dans la comédie, pourquoi ne pas se jeter sur les conditions? Mais quoi donc? le ridicule est-il le seul ton de la comédie? Pourquoi n'y mettrait-on pas des actions honnêtes et vertueuses? est-ce que ces actions n'ont pas lieu dans la société? Pourquoi ne rapprocherait-on pas davantage les mœurs théâtrales des mœurs domestiques? Dans la tragédie, on fait le même raisonnement. On dit: mais on n'a mis jusqu'à présent sur la scène que des rois, des princes. Pourquoi n'y mettrait-on des particuliers? Quoi donc? N'y a-t-il que la condition souveraine qui soit exposée à ces revers terribles, qui inspirent la commisération ou l'horreur? Et l'on fait des tragédies bourgeoises" (viii, 440).

This statement is important because it shows that the motives which prompted Diderot's artistic campaign were of a composite nature. Accordingly, in the *Entretiens* already mentioned as in the treatise *De la Poésie dramatique*, which is its sequel, Diderot appears bent on several purposes, *viz.*, to commend the new drama to the attention of those who yearned for new esthetic sensations and thus pave the way for artistic freedom; to proclaim its social utility and, incidentally, take up the cudgels for the hitherto despised inhabitants of *Rue Tiquetonne*; finally, to validate the legitimacy of the new theatre by showing that it always holds the mirror up to nature and truth. We shall now scrutinize these efforts.

II

DIDEROT PRESENTED "LE DRAME" AS AN AUTONOMOUS GENRE IN ORDER TO CONCEAL HIS INTENTION TO ESTABLISH IT ON THE RUINS OF THE PRIVILEGED "SYSTEM"

There is not the slightest doubt that, at the particular period we are concerned with, Diderot dealt with the stage in a thoroughly revolutionary frame of mind. No compromise was countenanced by the man who wrote in 1758 to Mme Riccoboni: "Ma première et ma seconde pièce forment un système d'action théâtrale dont il ne s'agit pas de chicaner un endroit, mais qu'il faut adopter ou rejeter en entier;" and "Tenez, mon

amie, je n'ai pas été dix fois au spectacle depuis quinze ans. Le faux de tout ce qui s'y fait me tue."¹ The burthen of Diderot's letter is that no compromise should be entered upon between the old order of things dramatic and the new, but that on the contrary, the old conventions should make room for the dictates of reason. This is the very program of action he had upheld in the article "*Encyclopédie*" (1755):

"Il faut fouler aux pieds toutes ces vieilles puérilités, renverser les barrières que la raison n'aura point posées, rendre aux sciences et aux arts une liberté qui leur est si précieuse, et dire aux admirateurs de l'antiquité: Appelez le *Marchand de Londres*² comme il vous plaira, pourvu que vous conveniez que cette pièce étincelle de beautés sublimes" (xiv, 474 ff.)

Yet in order to overcome the public's antagonism to artistic radicalism, Diderot was careful to have it appear that "*le drame*" (to designate Diderot's "système d'action théâtrale" by the name given to it by friends and foes alike) added to, without encroaching upon, the established and privileged "system" of which tragedy and comedy were the mainstays. Fontenelle³ had made use of the Leibnizian principle of continuity, which found so much favor with the estheticians of the eighteenth century, to preconize a "dramatic scale" or spectrum, extending from the *genre burlesque* to heroic tragedy, and a corresponding gradation of emotions—"le plaisant et le ridicule," "le pitoyable et le tendre," "le terrible et le grand" as well as their amalgamation. In this fashion he was able to justify the comedy of sensibility, the *théâtre larmoyant* in which "le pitoyable et le tendre" were mingled with the emotions of tragedy and comedy. More conservative than Fontenelle, at least in appearance, Diderot does not openly vindicate the mingled emotions, but instead, quoting Aristotle to the effect that in things moral there always is a mean between extremes, concludes that the "tone" of serious comedy must needs stand midway between

¹ vii, 405, 400.

² Lillo's *London Merchant*; first French trans., 1748.

³ Fontenelle, "Préface générale" in *Œuvres* (1754), t. vii, p. 5.

the mirth of the old comic *genre* and the pathos of tragedy. The drama thus obtains a niche of its own in which it could not be accused of molesting the *genres* of Molière and Racine. Diderot was not alone in this belief.⁴ Fréron, to choose a name from among the foes of the Encyclopedists, was of the same mind when he said: "Le sentiment nous a ouvert une route inconnue à Molière. Nos genres sont tout à fait distingués; nous ne dénaturons rien, nous créons."⁵

As set forth in the manifestos of 1757-58, the extremities of the dramatic scale are formed by two *genres* that have no foundation in reality, the disreputable burlesque⁶ (herein Diderot agrees with Boileau), and the "*merveilleux*," which is exemplified in the conventional operatic libretto. Between them, lie the two "real" boundaries of dramatic art, comedy and tragedy proper. These are legitimate poetic kinds, not only because founded on truth and nature, but also because of their "*honnêteté*" and social utility. (Need we be reminded of the fact that comedy ridicules vice and tragedy holds up to nations and their rulers the edifying spectacle of public catastrophes and princely misfortunes?)⁷ It is obvious that the middle portion of the scale rightfully belongs to *le drame*, because of its tone, which, as has been already stated, is intermediate between that of comedy and tragedy; because of the fact, which will be later dwelt upon, that it "generalizes" more than comedy and less than tragedy; and on account of its realism and, we are tempted to add, its prosaicism and *honnêteté*, qualities in which the new drama surpassed both its predecessors. There are also other reasons, such as its proportion of "action" and "movement."⁸ The following outline of the classification of dramatic *genres* forms a scheme which is not without analogy to the *chaîne des êtres* so popular with Diderot and the naturalists of the eighteenth century:

⁴ Thus, among others, L. Riccoboni, apropos of the comedy of sensibility. (Letter to Muratori, May 30, 1737, cited by A. Eloesser, *Das bürgerliche Drama*, p. 64).

⁵ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, iv, letter I.

⁶ vii, 135 f.

⁷ vii, 308 f.

⁸ Cf. vii, 318.

DIDEROT'S DRAMATIC SYSTEM

FORM

SPECIES

GENERA

(Indifferent?)

(Burlesque) farce,
parody, parade, etc.

Teratological; "hors de
la nature" Burlesque (Originat-
ing in satire)

Verse or prose

(Comic) farce, etc.
Character comedy, etc.

Comedy (gay)

Prose (and poetic
prose?)

Serious comedy
"Drame moral"
"Drame philosophique"
"Tragédie domestique
et bourgeoise"

"Drame" ("genre
sérieux")

Verse

Tragedy (heroic*)

Sung verse

Lyrical (pastoral and
epic opera)

Teratological

"Merveilleux"

* This dramatic scale is not to be understood as a complete tabulation of all the dramatic forms more or less openly recognized by Diderot; it does not include the pantomime, melodrama, realistic opera, etc. Of the kinds omitted the most important is "historical" tragedy (or drama) of which Diderot speaks in the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*. (V. the next chapter.)

But, Diderot might have been asked, Why create a new *genre* and not rest satisfied with an admixture to fill in the gap between tragedy and comedy? By way of answer, in addition to the argument from authority and example (for he claimed that his *genre* was originated by Menander and Terence),⁹ Diderot again appealed to the principle of continuity. Thus he, too, might have laughed, with Voltaire in *le Pauvre diable*,

Aux vains efforts d'un auteur amphibie,
Qui défigure et qui brave à la fois,
Dans son jargon, Melpomène et Thalie.

In the name of the law of continuity and unity, Diderot condemned, along with most of the *théâtre larmoyant*, heroic comedy and tragicomedy (*genres* in which Diderot should have acknowledged more than one precursor), as well as the still more objectionable tragiburlesque, exemplified to his mind in Otway's *Venice saved* and in *Hamlet*, false *genres*¹⁰ which admixed disparate sentiments (to say nothing of their admitting banter and caricature to the stage of the "honnêtes gens"). Diderot, who is in so many respects the prime mover of Romanticist drama, would not have tolerated (at least officially) the systematic juxtaposition of the grotesque and terrible and would have relegated the author of *Ruy Blas* to the theatres of the Fairs and Boulevards, or sentenced him to continue the decrepit operatic *genre* which had been once illustrated by Quinault and La Motte.

Not that Diderot frowned upon every attempt to introduce laughter in the drama.¹¹ To picture Diderot as a dramaturgic Jansenist is as wrong as to state, with certain authors of literary manuals, that he advocated the mingling *ad libitum* of the

⁹ v, 230 f.; vii, 135; cf. *Corr. Litt.*, vii, 413. V. Ernest Bernbaum, *The drama of sensibility* (Boston, 1915), ch. II.

¹⁰ vii, 137, 374.

¹¹ *Contra*, F. Gailfe, *Le drame en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1910), p. 450.

serious and comic." Diderot himself owns that the *Fils naturel* "a presque été fait dans les trois genres" (as "une pièce ne s'enferme jamais à la rigueur dans un genre"), and could be turned into a comedy or neo-tragedy without any change whatsoever in its first acts. He says of the ideal author of a *drame philosophique*, "A chaque instant il doit amener le ris sur le bord des lèvres, et les larmes aux yeux. Je mourrais content si j'avais rempli cette tâche comme je la conçois." Again, speaking of the dramatic Messiah for whom he prayed all his life and who was to "renew the phenomena of ancient tragedy," Diderot uttered the following significant words:

"Ils [scil., the phenomena of the ancient theatre] attendent, pour se montrer, un homme de génie qui sache combiner la pantomime avec le discours, entremêler une scène parlée avec une scène muette, et tirer parti de la réunion des deux scènes, et surtout de l'approche ou terrible ou comique de cette réunion qui se ferait toujours" (vii, 116).

When we reflect that the "comique" whereof Diderot speaks is to occur in a tragedy intended to bring "trouble and horror" to the minds of the audience; when we catch him conceding his fondness, "dans l'épique, dans l'ode et dans quelques genres de poésie élevée," for the contrast of sentiments and images and his admiration for "l'art de porter dans l'âme des sensations extrêmes et opposées"; when we witness his noting with satisfaction that, in a certain English play, "On rit et l'on est alternativement attendri"¹⁸—we may be sure that he was not intolerant, even in the drama, of the mingling of pathos and mirth, of the "tressaillement mêlé de peine et de plaisir, d'amertume et de douceur, de douceur et d'effroi."

We should be unduly severe if we accused Diderot of contradiction in this connection. In all likelihood Diderot would

¹⁸ Brunetière (*Les époques du théâtre français*, Paris, 1893, p. 230) distinguishes between the "fusion" and "mingling" of genres. This distinction is not clearly sanctioned by Diderot's theory; it nevertheless seems to hold in the main.

¹⁹ vii, 315.

²⁰ vii, 352.

²¹ viii, 466. (Of Hugh Kelly's *False delicacy*).

have reconciled his proscribing the *mélange des genres* with his legitimizing the use of mixed comic and tragic moments by means of the proviso that only as much of the *mélange* was licit as did not interfere with the unity of impression. At least, this is a natural inference from the following remark in the *Troisième entretien*: "Les nuances empruntées du genre comique sont-elles trop fortes? L'ouvrage fera rire et pleurer, et il n'aura plus ni unité d'intérêt, ni unité de coloris".¹⁶ Diderot might have gone even further, perhaps, and answered in the affirmative the question, "Si le comique pathétique n'a pas son charme particulier, n'est pas plus vrai et peut-être plus intéressant que le comique ordinaire." But on this point we must content ourselves with mere conjecture.

Another difficulty concerning the relationship of the "drama" to the other *genres* presents itself when Diderot imprudently calls attention to the possibility of several links between the old system and the new.

"J'ai essayé de donner, dans le *Fils naturel*, l'idée d'un drame qui fût entre la comédie et la tragédie. Le *Père de famille*, que je promis alors, et que des distractions continuelles ont retardé, est entre le genre sérieux du *Fils naturel*, et la comédie. Et si jamais j'en ai le loisir et le courage, je ne désespère pas de composer un drame qui se place entre le genre sérieux et la tragédie" (vii, 308.)

Diderot here points to his plays, written and projected,¹⁷ in order to demonstrate "que l'intervalle que j'apercevais entre les deux genres établis n'était pas chimérique." But he proves too much, as the admission of transitional dramatic forms favored the argument of those for whom the *genre sérieux* was a special kind of *comedy*. Yet this last was not the opinion of Diderot, who held that the "drama" was a true *genre* admitting of little intermixture with the other dramatic kinds: "Les petites nuances qu'il [the *genre* in question] empruntera d'un genre collatéral seront trop faibles pour le déguiser."¹⁸ In

¹⁶ Cf. vii, 138, 135 f. and Grimm's *Corresp. litt.*, viii, 319 f. (April 1st, 1769).

¹⁷ vii, 136.

¹⁸ vii., 136.

fact, he was as much annoyed by the conservatism which forbade the adoption of new forms of art as by the liberalism which was blind to their revolutionary character: "S'il existe un genre il est difficile d'en introduire un nouveau. Celui-ci est-il introduit? Autre préjugé: bientôt on imagine que les deux genres adoptés sont voisins et se touchent."¹⁷

Are we to conclude that Diderot faced a logical *impasse*? And how shall we account for his predicament? As often happens, the way out of one difficulty suggests itself in wrestling with another one. Hitherto we had assumed, on the strength of Diderot's employing the terms "*drame sérieux*" and "*tragédie domestique*" interchangeably whenever he illustrates the poetics of the new theatre, that the two constitute together a single *genre*, the "*drame*" *par excellence*. A further assumption, which received graphic expression in our outline of the "dramatic scale" in this sub-chapter, was that the "*genre sérieux*," rather than *bourgeoise* tragedy, was typical of the whole. This second assumption must be modified, however, in the light of such utterances as the following:

"Le genre sérieux...penche plutôt vers la tragédie que vers la comédie" (vii, 138).

"Pendant que Dorval parlait ainsi, je faisais une réflexion singulière. C'est comment, à l'occasion d'une aventure domestique qu'il avait mise en comédie, il établissait des préceptes communs à tous les genres dramatiques, et était toujours entraîné par sa mélancolie à ne les appliquer qu'à la tragédie" (vii, 119).

"La tragédie domestique aurait...l'effet de la tragédie à produire" (vii, 332).

This last statement may be compared with what Diderot says, in a letter of December 20, 1765, apropos of Sedaine's *Philosophe sans le savoir*: "Ce sont les terreurs de la tragédie produites avec les moyens de l'opéra comique."¹⁸ Further, with

¹⁷ vii, 308. This may explain in part his reticence concerning La Chaussée's drama.

¹⁸ xix, 213.

a passage, most likely written by Diderot, in Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire*:

"J'imagine un genre de comédie bien plus tragique, si l'on peut parler ainsi, que le larmoyant... Une telle comédie bien conduite serait plus dans la nature que la plupart de nos tragédies et j'ai dans la tête qu'elle produirait des effets étonnants."²¹

And so we must ask, How can domestic tragedy be spoken of as an intermediate genre when it aims to duplicate the effect of tragedy, that is to say, appear not merely as "serious" and touching, but even as "terrible"?

Happily, in the *Troisième Entretien*, Diderot dropped the mask of conservatism to the extent of suggesting that the new drama-tragedy was radically different from the old:

"On dit qu'il n'y a plus de grandes passions tragiques à émouvoir; qu'il est impossible de présenter les sentiments d'une manière neuve et frappante. Cela peut être dans la tragédie, telle que les Grecs, les Romains, les Français, les Italiens, les Anglais et tous les autres peuples de la terre l'ont composée. Mais la tragédie domestique aura une autre action, un autre ton, et un sublime qui lui sera propre" (vii, 146).

To him who reads between the lines last quoted, it is evident that our author already held the belief which he explicitly stated only much later, in the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, viz., that a new tragedy was destined to supplant the old, and not merely to supplement it. The two could not stand together, for "Le système dramatique le plus mal entendu, serait celui qu'on pourrait accuser d'être moitié vrai et moitié faux. C'est un mensonge maladroit, où certaines circonstances me décèlent l'impossibilité du reste."²² The tactics of Diderot thus appear to have been, first, to commend the serious *genre* as an addition to the existing dramatic kinds; then, upon its gaining acceptance, to use it as an entering wedge for *bourgeoise* tragedy; finally, to relegate heroic tragedy to the outer and "marvellous"

²¹ *Corr. Litt.*, II, 334 (April 1st, 1754).

²² vii, 374.

fringe of the dramatic scale, and in its former place to enthrone the historic drama. It is the same tactics he preconized in connection with the operatic revolution. Thus, albeit by revolutionary dialectics, we at last find an answer to the difficulties we have noted in Diderot's theory. Whatever we may think of his tactics, we must concede to Diderot that there is no *real* contradiction between his presenting the "drama" as a postulate of the dramatic régime then in force, and at the same time considering it as a true autonomous *genre*, and one admitting no intermixing with the older dramatic kinds. If there was a contradiction anywhere, Diderot would have placed it in the old dramatic *régime* itself, and held the "drama" to be all the more "true" for disclosing the fatal weakness of the privileged "system".

III

POLITICAL ENDS OF DIDEROT'S DRAMATURGY. ITS SOCIAL UTILITY

The new drama of which Diderot was the theoretician has been defined by its latest historian, M. Gaiffe, as a "genre nouveau créé par le parti philosophique pour attendre et moraliser la bourgeoisie et le peuple en leur présentant un tableau de leurs propres aventures et de leur propre milieu."¹ This definition gives proper emphasis to the fact that the "*drame*" was above everything else a vehicle for philosophic propaganda. Yet Diderot was none too anxious to dwell publicly on its potentialities as an instrument of social and political action by a radical party. Instead, he loved to descant in more or less traditional fashion on the social function of the playwright. In the article *Encyclopédie*, for instance, we read: "C'est manquer son but que d'amuser et de plaire quand on peut instruire et toucher."² The end or one of the ends of the dramatic poet, we read in *De la Poésie dramatique*, is to "faire

¹ F. Gaiffe, *Le drame en France au xviii^e siècle*, p. 78. *Contra*, W. T. Peirce, *The bourgeois from Molière to Beaumarchais* (Columbus, O., 1907), p. 71, etc.

² xiv, 495.

aimer la vertu et haïr le vice."³ The drama, he wrote to Mme Riccoboni, must pursue "un but moral par l'imitation de la nature."⁴ Therefore, a great poet must also be a moralist; so much the better if the moralist is a good man:

"Si vous êtes bien né, si la nature vous a donné un esprit doit et un cœur sensible, fuyez pour un temps la société des hommes; allez vous étudier vous-même. Comment l'instrument rendra-t-il une juste harmonie, s'il est désaccordé? Faites-vous des notions exactes des choses; comparez votre conduite avec vos devoirs; rendez-vous homme de bien et ne croyez pas que ce travail et ce temps si bien employés pour l'homme soient perdus pour l'auteur. Il rejaillira de la perfection morale que vous aurez établie dans votre caractère et dans vos mœurs, une nuance de grandeur et de justice qui se répandra sur tout ce que vous écrirez" (vii, 389 f.)

To the moral possibilities of the stage must be added the political. "Tout peuple a des préjugés à détruire, des vices à poursuivre, des ridicules à décrier, et a besoin de spectacles mais qui lui soient propres. Quel moyen, si le gouvernement en sait user, et qu'il sait préparer le changement d'une loi et l'abrogation d'un usage."⁵ How much good could be accomplished, exclaimed Diderot, if the government would collaborate with dramatic artists and especially with the philosophers.⁶ With evident pride he tells us, in the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, that "lorsque je donnai le *Père de famille*, le magistrat de la police m'exhorta à suivre ce genre."⁷ In fact, as early as 1757, remembering a lesson from Shaftesbury, he made bold to suggest a partnership with the administration, which the comic writers might successfully defend against the aggression of "fanatics," that is to say, Jesuits and Jansenists, and perhaps dangerous political and economic radicals.

"Qu'est-ce qu'Aristophane? Un farceur original. Un auteur de cette espèce doit être précieux pour le gouvernement, s'il sait l'employer. C'est à lui qu'il faut abandonner

³ vii, 313; cf. 146, 108 f.

⁴ Cf. viii, 388 ff.

⁵ vii, 313.

⁶ vii, 108, 313.

⁷ viii, 401.

tous les enthousiastes qui troublent de temps en temps la société. Si on les expose à la foire, on n'en remplira pas les prisons" (vii, 319).

This proposal from the man who invoked suppression of Palissot's *Satirique* might seem odious, were it not for his having also once attempted to persuade Mercier "que les lois n'auront pas tort de brûler un athée en place publique,"⁹ and for his having pardoned a certain monk his attacks on free thinkers.¹⁰ Moreover, Diderot's hope of government coöperation was not so preposterous as it may seem. Shortly after the time we are considering, between 1760 and 1770, the Philosophers captured the Academy.¹¹ More than once, Palissot and other adversaries of the Philosophic Party felt the weight of what has been called, with much exaggeration, the "literary despotism" of the philosophers.¹² Fréron's *Année littéraire* was suspended for an attack on d'Alembert. "Peu s'en faut," once wrote Grimm, "que même les meilleurs esprits ne se persuadent que l'empire doux et paisible de la philosophie va succéder aux longs orages de la déraison."¹³ Some act of repression would dash these hopes, but they would be revived again. It is too much to say with M. Belin that after the reaction provoked by the *Système de la nature* (1770) had spent itself, under Turgot's ministry, "les philosophes et les économistes de persécutés devenaient persécuteurs."¹⁴ But the fact remains that Turgot was a *ministre philosophe* and radicalism came into power with him.

Diderot's anxiety not to arouse unnecessary antagonism at a critical time is responsible for his appearing not to have gone further than La Chaussée, whose lachrymose comedy of sensi-

⁹ L. Béclard, *S. Mercier*, p. 72. "La tolérance [says Diderot] n'est jamais que le système du persécuté, système qu'il abandonne aussitôt qu'il est assez fort pour être persécuteur." (M. Tournoux, *Diderot et Catherine II*. Paris, 1899, p. 307).

¹⁰ vi, 369 f.

¹¹ V. Brunel, *Les Philosophes et l'Académie* (Paris, 1884), Bk. II.

¹² Delafarge, *La vie et les ouvrages de Palissot*, p. 310 ff., 549 ff; F. Cornou, *Elie Fréron* (Paris, 1922), p. 169, 303.

¹³ *Corr. Litt.* II, 328 (Jan. 15, 1757).

¹⁴ J. P. Belin, *Le mouvement philosophique de 1748 à 1789* (Paris, 1913), p. 351.

bility aimed to destroy social prejudices, just like Diderot's "*drame moral*," which was devoted to the "question du suicide, de l'honneur, du duel, de la fortune, des dignités," and Diderot's "*drame philosophique*." His consistent preaching of professional ideals, his apparent acceptance of the existing social structure and duties as things entirely static, his speaking, even later in the seventies, and in connection with *historical* drama, of nothing more revolutionary than arousing commiseration over the fate of the unfortunate, convinced one of the best students of Diderot, *viz.*, Rosenkranz, that our philosopher "maintained the *moral* point of view even while his century had progressed to the political."¹⁴ Yet even Rosenkranz admits that "in seiner hierin unbewusster Genialitaet," and as early as 1758, Diderot had made the plot of his *Père de famille* revolve about a *lettre de cachet*. And we have heard Diderot proclaim the drama an excellent auxiliary to legislation. The truth seems to be that from the beginning of his dramatic crusade, Diderot was fully aware of the opportunities for oppositionist politics which the new theatre afforded, but did not care to be too outspoken just when the Encyclopedia had begun to feel the weight of the temporal and secular powers.¹⁵ Further on, in this chapter and in the one on Acting, Diderot will testify to his abiding faith in the social and political revolution which, according to him, was correlated with the artistic. For the present we need only observe that in the discourse *De la Poésie dramatique*, Diderot himself invites us to read between the lines of his plays. In theory at least, his was the subtler kind of propaganda, unknown to the "Reverend Father" La Chaussée and despised by Mercier, which shuns the threadbare tirade. It is the method which Sedaine and Beaumarchais were to employ with such marked success:

"Qu'un auteur intelligent fasse entrer dans son ouvrage des traits que le spectateur s'applique, j'y consens; qu'il y

¹⁴ Rosenkranz, *Diderot* (2nd ed.) II, 213.

¹⁵ Like several of his contemporaries Diderot was aware of the existence of class struggle. "Dans la nature, toutes les espèces se dévorent, toutes les conditions se dévorent dans la société" (v, 421). "Les conditions n'ont-elles pas entre elles les mêmes contrastes que les caractères? Et le poète ne pourra-t-il pas les opposer?" (vii, 151).

rappelle des ridicules en vogue, des vices dominants, des événements publics: qu'il plaise, mais que ce soit sans y penser. Si l'on remarque son but, il le manque; il cesse de dialoguer, il prêche" (vii, 345 f.)

Mercier¹⁶ found fault with Racine for having made light of a judge in *Les Plaideurs*, and, gravely shaking his head over Molière's banter, urged the poet: "S'il peint le vice, qu'il ne plaisante point. Le rire deviendrait alors sacrilège. Le vice doit toujours inspirer de l'aversion." Cato-Diderot we are glad to say, redeemed his all too obvious and not quite sincere Puritanism by such concessions to dramatic objectivity as the following: "Il n'y a rien de sacré pour le poète, pas même la vertu, qu'il couvrira de ridicule, si la personne et le moment l'exigent."¹⁷ He admitted that poetical *mores* are not morally best,¹⁸ even as he cynically owned that he did not detest great crimes, because they make beautiful subjects in painting. This is why, in Diderot's *Joueur*,¹⁹ Stukely preaches that "Les lois éternelles de la nature sont la ruse et la force," and justifies crime by reference to the code of Nature which contains only one word: "Freedom."

Diderot's "virtuous" theatre is, happily, not entirely and artificially virtuous. It knows heinous deeds and wretches who are not good at heart and who do not repent. (The originator of the new comedy, Destouches, knew these not and made numerous disciples). Diderot felt that, let Rousseau say what he will, *he* could hold the mirror up to human nature without any of the dire consequences predicted by that misanthropist. While admitting, with Dorval's Constance, that "il n'y avait point d'homme, quelque honnête qu'il fût, qui, dans un violent accès de passion, ne désirât, au fond de son cœur, les honneurs de la vertu et les avantage du vice," he believed, or found it expedient to believe, that "les hommes de bien sont plus réellement hommes de bien que les méchants ne sont méchants;

¹⁶ *Du Théâtre* (1773), pp. 74, 76.

¹⁷ vii, 363.

¹⁸ vii, 371.

¹⁹ vii, 466. It is worth noting that the author of the original *Gambler*, traced crime to free-thinking; an opinion in which Pallissot concurred.

que la bonté nous est plus indivisiblement attachée que la méchanceté."²⁰ He hoped that in the new theatre even the wicked would "see the human species as it is, and would become reconciled to it. Good men are rare, but they exist."²¹ Owing to an original bent for order and virtue, man, no matter how depraved, is always sensitive to the example of virtue and therefore capable of moral education.²² So convinced was Diderot of man's perfectibility that he affirmed "qu'il n'y avait rien qu'on ne pût sur le cœur humain avec de la vérité, de l'honnêteté et de l'éloquence."²³

— "Je le répète donc, l'honnête. Il nous touche d'une manière plus intime et plus douce que ce qui excite notre mépris et nos ris....

— La nature humaine est donc bonne?

— Oui, mon ami, et très bonne. L'eau, l'air, la terre, le feu, tout est bon dans la nature.... Ce sont les misérables conventions qui pervertissent l'homme, et non la nature qu'il faut accuser. En effet, qu'est-ce qui nous affecte comme le récit d'une action généreuse? Où est le malheureux qui puisse écouter froidement la plainte d'un homme de bien?" (vii, 312).

Diderot considered his "*drame*" admirably fitted for the moral mission of art. Tragedy was too remote from everyday life to be morally effective; comedy taught men how to eschew the ridicule of vice without inspiring in them the decision to be good.²⁴ Now, Diderot might have admitted that the comedy of "sensibility" merely called forth, in the words of the author of the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, "un sentiment bientôt étouffé par les passions, une pitié stérile qui se repaît de quelque larmes et n'a jamais produit le moindre acte d'humanité."²⁵ But he

²⁰ vii, 128. Cf. xi, 118 (*Salon de 1767*).

²¹ vii, 310.

²² vii, 67 ff.

²³ vii, 129. On the history of the question of the morality of the stage, see the series of papers by L. Bourquin in *Rev. d'hist. litt.*, t. xxvi ff.

²⁴ Cf. v, 443 (*le Neveu de Rameau*).

²⁵ Cf. the admissions of Diderot in the *Salon de 1767*, x, 118. The *Paradoxe sur le comédien* seems to be the outcome of the realization of the amoral character of false sensibility.

insisted that the new "drama of conditions" delivered its social message too directly and forcibly for any one to miss it.

"Il me semble que cette source est plus féconde, plus étendue, et plus utile que celle des caractères. Pour peu que le caractère fût chargé, un spectateur pouvait se dire à lui même, ce n'est pas moi. Mais il ne peut se cacher que l'état qu'on joue devant lui, ne soit le sien; il ne peut méconnaître ses devoirs. Il faut qu'il s'applique ce qu'il entend."²⁸

What with the direct and realistic presentation of highly pathetic scenes, the enormous theatres required by his "system," the contagious emotion in huge crowds, the intensification of emotion by his "simultaneous scenes", Diderot hoped that the frenzied enthusiasm of the ancient spectators of the drama might be revived.²⁹

Said Dorval's Constance: "Les passions détruisent plus de préjugés que la philosophie. Et comment le mensonge leur résisterait-il? Elles ébranlent quelquefois la vérité."³⁰ With the passions of the people at the service of truth, Diderot believed he could work wonders. There can be no doubt that Grimm gave expression to the fondest wish and hope of Diderot when he said, apropos of the *Fils naturel*:

"Ceux qui sont en état de pressentir les révolutions et les événements qu'elles amènent, prétendent que cette pièce fera une révolution sur notre théâtre, et que M. Diderot n'a qu'à continuer à travailler dans ce genre pour être le maître absolu du théâtre. Ma prédiction va plus loin: il ne tient qu'à M. Diderot de faire une révolution salutaire dans les mœurs en ramenant les conditions sur la scène, et son *Père de famille* accomplira cette prédiction" (*Corr. litt.* iii, 357, March 1, 1757).

²⁸ vii, 150. Cf. La Chaussée, *Fausse antipathie*, prol. scène viii; also Fréron, *l. cit.* For somewhat similar claims on behalf of the genre larmoyant, cf. De Bougainville, *Discours de réception à l'Académie*, May 30, 1751, in Vial and Denise, *Idées et doctrines litt. du xviiiè s.*, p. 223 ff.

²⁹ vii, 121 f., 116.

³⁰ vii, 126.

IV

THE GENERAL "POETICS" OF DIDEROT IS IDEO-REALISTIC. IT ALLOWS CONSIDERABLE LATITUDE TO SUBJECTIVISM IN SPITE OF ITS OBJECTIVISTIC FORMULAS

Although Diderot was fully aware of the fact that the growth of radical dramaturgy had been conditioned by the social revolution whereby the bourgeoisie had risen to prominence,¹ he nevertheless endeavored to rest the "drama" on the theoretical foundation of the "*système de la nature*," and present it as an application of the theory of natural imitation. The essay *De la Poésie dramatique*, the outcome of this endeavor, cannot be pronounced a thorough success. The critic will no doubt find fault with Diderot's obscure notions, imperfect distinctions, sweeping omissions, inductions from too few instances, the rather haphazard stringing of esthetic theorems, and so forth. He might find extra-esthetic notions disguised as esthetic categories. According to his own point of view, he might be exasperated by Diderot's employing the recognized terms of the critical trade in ways and to purposes not sanctioned by tradition, or else wish that Diderot had not tried, as he apparently did, to reconcile Aristotle, Horace, Boileau and Racine to himself and to one another. He may bear witness with Sainte-Beuve to Diderot's abhorrence of conventionality and preciosity, to his sincere effort to recall his contemporaries to truth of manners, reality of sentiments, and observation of nature. Or he may sadly reflect that truth and nature have always been words to conjure with, and that Diderot employed them to no better purpose than the other founders of literary schools. *Sed non nostrum est tantas componere lites*. In this sub-chapter we shall only incidentally dwell on the cogency, filiation or originality of Diderot's ideas, our main purpose being to outline his theory of the drama on the basis of his specifically dramatic writings, elucidating his manifestos of 1757-58, if need be, by his other contribution to the general "poetics" of dramatic imitation.

¹ Cf. vii, 151; viii, 440 f.

As already stated, Diderot's dramatic system is presented as a special chapter of general esthetic, as an application of the far-reaching doctrine of "imitation or painting" of "truth or nature." Like Batteux and Rameau, Diderot believed that the arts of imitation, or rather all arts (since "les sens ne sont tous qu'un toucher, tous les arts qu'une imitation")¹ were rendered possible because of these two facts: that, on the one hand, nature is constant in its operations and, on the other, that this gratifies our sense of order. Although he refused to call it an "instinct,"² Diderot held, with Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Adam Smith³ and many other authors, that the esthetic sense (which he calls "taste") and moral conscience were one and the same thing though applied to different objects. "Je définis," says Dorval speaking for Diderot, "je définis la vertu, le goût de l'ordre dans les choses morales. Le goût de l'ordre en général nous domine dès la plus tendre enfance; il est plus ancien dans notre âme... qu'aucun sentiment réfléchi... Il agit en nous, sans que nous nous en apercevions; c'est le germe de l'honnêteté et du bon goût."⁴ (This, be it said in passing, is worth remembering when we come to speak of the connection Diderot perceived between moral and esthetical judgments.)

It follows from these definitions that the artist or "poet" who endeavors to "paint" reality, obeys the same impulse, pursues the same ends of order, clearness and universality as the natural philosopher in quest of the eternal "*rappports*" nature is made of. In the famous Academic discourse on Taste which entered into the *Encyclopédie* under the heading of "*Goût*," d'Alembert eulogized the "*littérateur philosophe*"; Diderot would have said that to be a full-fledged artist one *must* be a philosopher also. His profession of esthetic faith is thus at the outset thoroughly objectivistic:

¹ vii, 162.

² xi, 25; x, 27. The bias towards intellectualism differentiates Diderot from Rousseau.

³ Hutcheson, *Enquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty*; Adam Smith, *Theory of moral sentiments*.

⁴ vii, 127. Cf. Batteux's definition of taste.

⁵ *Réflexions sur l'usage et sur l'abus de la philosophie dans les matières de goût* (1757).

"Un goût dominant de l'ordre... nous contraint à mettre de la proportion entre les êtres..." (vii, 148).

"Il n'y a de beautés durables que celles qui sont fondées sur des rapports avec les êtres de la nature. Si l'on imaginait les êtres dans une vicissitude rapide, toute peinture ne représentant qu'un instant qui fuit, toute imitation serait superflue. Les beautés ont, dans les arts, le même fondement que les vérités dans la philosophie. Qu'est-ce que la vérité? La conformité de nos jugements avec les êtres. Qu'est-ce que la beauté d'imitation? La conformité de l'image avec la chose" (vii, 156).

"L'art dramatique ne prépare les événements que pour les enchaîner; et il ne les enchaîne dans ses productions, que parce qu'ils le sont dans la nature. L'art imite jusqu'à la manière subtile avec laquelle la nature nous dérobe la liaison des effets" (vii, 130).

A corollary which Diderot developed in the article "*Encyclopédie*" is that

"un écrivain qui veut assurer à ses ouvrages un charme éternel ne pourra emprunter avec trop de réserve sa manière de dire des idées du jour, des opinions courantes, des systèmes régnants, des arts en vogue; tous ces modèles sont en vicissitude. Il s'attachera de préférence aux êtres permanents, aux phénomènes des eaux, de la terre et de l'air, au spectacle de l'univers et aux passions de l'homme qui sont toujours les mêmes" (xiv, 432).

To the objects of imitation here enumerated the discourse *De la Poésie dramatique* adds, as will be shown later, "*les conditions*," or the various social stations, and, of course, human actions. Accordingly, the poet and especially the dramatic poet, must also be a psychologist and sociologist:

"Qu'il soit philosophe, qu'il ait descendu en lui-même, qu'il y ait vu la nature humaine, qu'il soit profondément instruit des états de la société, qu'il en connaisse bien les fonctions et le poids, les inconvénients et les avantages" (vii, 309).

This is why Ariste-Diderot

"se livra à l'histoire, à la philosophie, à la morale, aux sciences et aux arts; et il fut à cinquante-cinq ans homme de

bien, homme instruit, homme de goût, grand auteur 'et critique excellent" (vii, 394) —

• Indeed, an accomplished Encyclopedist.

This is objectivism with a vengeance. Yet little by little Diderot manages to mitigate it. To begin with, he establishes a distinction between the aims and methods of the artist and those of the natural philosopher (who is concerned with the abstract and general laws of nature and their "interpretation") and of the historian (whom Diderot, retaining the traditional view, pictured as a cataloguer of particular events). Contrasted with these two, the poet appears as a "*systématique*," a framer of hypotheses, and not a seeker of the absolute, of general truths and particular facts. As such he must strive to render the "illusion" only of truth. He must so link the parts of his "poem" as to give the impression of cohesion and necessity. The following lines are of interest because they foreshadow the theory of the "experimental novel":

"Se rappeler une suite nécessaire d'images telles qu'elles se succèdent dans la nature, c'est raisonner d'après les faits. Se rappeler une suite d'images comme elles se succéderaient nécessairement dans la nature, tel ou tel phénomène étant donné, c'est raisonner d'après une hypothèse, ou feindre; c'est être philosophe ou poète selon le but qu'on se propose. Et le poète qui feint, et le philosophe qui raisonne, sont également et dans le même sens, conséquents ou inconsequents: car être conséquent, ou avoir l'expérience de l'enchaînement nécessaire des phénomènes, c'est la même chose" (vii, 334).

"Nous cherchons en tout une certaine unité; c'est cette unité qui fait le beau, soit réel, soit imaginaire; une circonstance est-elle donnée, cette circonstance entraîne les autres et le système se forme vrai, si la circonstance a été prise dans la nature; faux si ce fut une affaire de convention ou de caprice" (vii, 403; to Mme Riccoboni).

"Les vertus s'enchaînent les unes aux autres; et les vices se tiennent pour ainsi dire par la main...c'est une sorte d'association nécessaire. Imaginer un caractère c'est trouver d'après une passion dominante donnée, bonne ou mauvaise, les passions subordonnées qui l'accompagnent, les sentiments, les

discours et les actions qu'elle suggère, et la sorte de teinte ou d'énergie que tout le système intellectuel et moral en reçoit; d'où l'on voit que les peintures idéales...ne peuvent jamais devenir chimériques" (xiv, 487; art. "*Encyclopédie*").

"Au lieu que la liaison des événements nous échappe souvent dans la nature, et que faute de connaître l'ensemble des choses, nous ne voyons qu'une concomitance fatale dans les faits, le poète veut, lui, qu'il règne dans toute la texture de son ouvrage une liaison apparente et sensible; en sorte qu'il est moins vrai et plus vraisemblable que l'historien" (vii, 329).

The words "peintures idéales," "beau imaginaire," "poète qui feint" testify to the recognition by Diderot of a certain amount of independence of the data of experience. Thus far, however, the difference between the methods and aims of the poet and those of the naturalist is only quantitative.

The ways of the artist and naturalist are seen to drift further and further apart when the former is enjoined to eschew the "simple et froide uniformité des choses communes."⁷ The poet's manner of imitation as well as his models, Diderot tells us (following Aristotle or his commentators) must compel our interest and admiration. Hence the necessary appearance in every "poem" of something "marvellous" or "*merveilleux*," that is to say extraordinary.

In this connection we must deplore the loss of Diderot's ideas on the subject of "historical certitude," which for him is the basis of poetics; it would have been especially instructive to witness his "establishing the delicate shades which distinguish the chimerical from the possible, the possible from the marvellous, the marvellous from embellished nature, embellished nature from the common."⁸ Fortunately, statements enough have been preserved to enable us to approximate the general trend of his ideas on this head. Some of the distinctions indicated above, the "marvellous" for instance, are adumbrated in *De la Poésie dramatique*:

⁷ vii, 329.

⁸ xix, 242 (Sept. 24, 1767).

⁹ vii, 335.

"Il arrive quelquefois à l'ordre naturel des choses d'enchaîner des incidents extraordinaires. C'est le même ordre qui distingue le merveilleux du miraculeux. Les cas rares sont merveilleux; les cas naturellement impossibles sont miraculeux."¹⁰

A special case of the "merveilleux" is the "*verniss romanesque*" which Diderot defines as follows:

"Un ouvrage sera romanesque, si le merveilleux naît de la simultanéité des événements; si l'on y voit les dieux ou les hommes trop méchants, ou trop bons; si les choses et les caractères y diffèrent trop de ce que l'expérience ou l'histoire nous les montre; et surtout si l'enchaînement des événements y est trop extraordinaire et trop compliqué" (vii, 330).

We may surmise that the *romanesque* or Romanticist veneer is thickest in the epic and novel, though to a lesser extent in the realistic *genre* of Richardson. But it also "unhappily adheres to the dramatic *genre*, owing to the necessity of imitating the general order of things only when it is pleased to combine extraordinary incidents; for only such afford dramatic interest."

But whilst the "miraculous" proper is interesting, it does not command lasting or absorbing interest. The fairy way of writing, like the "conte plaisant,"¹¹ may amuse us, but does little else. How could it when it has no real objects of imitation? Deep and lasting interest attaches only to that which can procure us the "illusion" of reality, and a good poem of any kind must be "marvellous without ceasing to be verisimilar." The extraordinary must be redeemed by the trivial,—a compensatory formula which is thus expressed by Diderot:

"Le poète ne peut s'abandonner à toute la fougue de son imagination; il est des bornes qui lui sont prescrites. Il a le modèle de sa conduite dans les cas de l'ordre général des choses. Voilà sa règle. Plus ces cas seront rares et singuliers, plus il lui faudra d'art, de temps, d'espace et de circonstances communes pour en composer le merveilleux et fonder

¹⁰ vii, 329. Cf. xii, 126 (*Pensées détachées sur la peinture*, etc.); x, 481 (*Essai sur la peinture*).

¹¹ v, 276; vii, 152.

l'illusion. Si le fait historique n'est pas assez merveilleux, il le fortifiera par des incidents extraordinaires; s'il l'est trop, il l'affaiblira par des incidents communs" (vii, 334 f.)

In short, Diderot claims on behalf of the artist the privilege of practicing what Father Rapin called "le tempérament du merveilleux et du vraisemblable."²² The similarity of the formulas employed by the two critics conceals, however, a marked difference. For while Rapin defined the "marvellous" as something *against* the order of nature and the "verisimilar" as that which conforms to popular belief, decorum and even technical recipe, Diderot seems to have assimilated the marvellous to the "singular instance" of Baconian physics and the verisimilar to the *vera causa* of Newtonian fame. It is not surprising, then, if he held a work of art to be a concatenation of fact and fancy resembling that of fact and hypothesis in a "system" of physics.

Besides preferring the marvellous and verisimilar to the less "interesting" aspects of nature, the poetic imitation of nature differs from its scientific interpretation inasmuch as the main concern of art, the interesting thing *par excellence*, is human suffering and human passion. Thus, having begun by the statement that the beauty of art has the same foundation as the truth of nature, Diderot ended by saying equally emphatically that:

"Autre chose est la vérité en poésie; autre chose en philosophie. Pour être vrai, le philosophe doit conformer son discours à la nature des objets; le poète à la nature de ses caractères. Peindre d'après la passion et l'intérêt, voilà son talent" (vii, 363).

Following the lead of Du Bos, Diderot regarded the power of art to touch and move as its most important function. Diderot often speaks as if emotion were intrinsically esthetic and one must scrutinize Diderot's writings very closely to learn that the capacity of art to express and arouse emotions is secondary to that of educing that state of disinterestedness and pleasure in which, estheticians say, consists the spell of art.²³

²² Rapin, *Réflexions sur la poétique; de la poétique en général*, sect. xxiii, in *Œuvres* (Amst., 1709), vol. II, p. 136.

²³ Cf. xi, 116 (*Salon de 1767*).

To pursue our inquiry into the nature of poetic (and therefore dramatic) imitation, whilst the Aristotelians speak of "idealizing" nature, of carrying out its intention, of "perfecting" and "embellishing" it, Diderot speaks of sentimentalizing it. The artist, says he, must choose the "strongest" nature, i. e., that most steeped in passion, and in framing his hypotheses he may, or must, further energize passion by setting it in the medium most favorable to its growth. Other things being equal, he should conceive the tensest situations imaginable. It is this practise which differentiates the dramatic poet from the historian.

"On lit, dans l'histoire, ce qu'un homme du caractère de Henri IV a fait et souffert. Mais combien de circonstances possibles où il eût agi et souffert d'une manière conforme à son caractère, plus merveilleuse, que l'histoire n'offre pas, mais que la poésie imagine!" (vii, 333).

"Si l'on mettait en vers l'*Histoire de Charles XII* elle n'en serait pas moins une histoire. Si l'on mettait la *Henriade* en prose, elle n'en serait pas moins un poème. Mais l'historien a écrit ce qui est arrivé, purement et simplement, ce qui ne fait pas toujours sortir les caractères autant qu'ils pourraient; ce qui n'émeut ni n'intéresse pas autant qu'il est possible d'émouvoir et d'intéresser. Le poète eût écrit tout ce qui lui aurait semblé devoir affecter le plus. Il eût feint des discours. Il eût changé l'histoire" (vii, 332).

Characterization and emotive expression are thus closely interconnected and essential to imitation; moreover, "l'expression est en général l'image d'un sentiment," or somatic translation of emotion." Hence the extensive painting of emotion in Diderot's novels and dramas, and its prominence in his theory.

"Qu'est-ce qui nous affecte dans le spectacle de l'homme animé de quelques grandes passions? Sont-ce ses discours? Quelquefois. Mais ce qui émeut toujours, ce sont des cris, des mots articulés, des voix rompues, quelques monosyllabes qui s'échappent par intervalles, je ne sais quel murmure dans la gorge, entre les dents... La voix, le ton, le geste, l'action,

"x, 484 (*Essai sur la peinture*).

vollà ce qui appartient à l'acteur; et c'est ce qui nous frappe surtout dans le spectacle des grandes passions" (vii, 105 f.)

He carried out this notion to excess in the *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (1770-78) by inviting the actor to present the outward semblance of emotion, without feeling it.²⁵ His true opinion, however, which harmonizes all his utterances, is that the portrayal of inner struggle must go hand in hand with that of its external manifestations.

It is at this point that, albeit surreptitiously, subjectivism at last enters Diderot's poetics, "eloquence" and "poesy" being by him assigned almost the same mimetic function as the outward manifestations of expression. As Diderot is not explicit in this connection, it is well to remember two things that make his meaning clearer. First, that the essence of "poetry" (and "eloquence") is the elaboration of "images"; a point on which Diderot agrees with Du Bos²⁶ and countless predecessors. Next, that these "images" inherit the function which La Motte and Shaftesbury (not to mention the Italians that preceded them) ascribed to "design" or *dessein*, i. e., the mental form which guides the artist's composition and is superimposed on the object of his imitation. Disgusted with the everlasting "fable" or fiction,²⁷ with mythology and allegories, La Motte had wished for something radically different, for

"une fiction de figures et de tours, qui donne de la vie à tout, qui mette la raison même en images, qui fasse agir et raisonner les vertus et les vices, et qui, en peignant les passions, fasse quelquefois sentir d'un seul mot de génie leur principe, leurs stratagèmes et leurs effets."²⁸

Diderot, too, sets down reason in images,²⁹ and emotion and motion beside reason. But he does it in another fashion. Accepting as he did Locke, Condillac and Hume's account of

²⁵ V. the chapter on acting and tragedy. Cf. the discussion in Jacques le Fataliste (1773), vi, 160.

²⁶ Cf. Du Bos, *Réflexions critiques*, pt. 1, sect. 33.

²⁷ La Motte, *Discours sur les prix que décernait l'Académie*, Quoted by Dupont, *Houdar de la Motte* (Paris, 1890), p. 271.

²⁸ Cf. v, 213 (*Eloge de Richardson*).

the origin of ideas," he held that all our abstract notions had been derived from "*images*" or "*tableaux*."²⁰ (He seems, by the way, to have conceived this pictorial primordium as evolving out of still more original motor "*impressions*."²¹) He regarded concrete, imaginative, primitivist, or "poetic" thinking as more expressive and communicative of feeling than the algebraic symbolism of science and philosophy. These images, directly or through the association with other "*images*," "*rapports*" and "*idées accessoires*" which they induce in the minds of readers or listeners stimulate at once sense, imagination, sensibility and reason.²²

Diderot was one of the earliest estheticians to tone down the antithesis of "matter" and "form" and he lent the weight of his authority to those who—like Du Bos, Saint-Mard, d'Alembert and Chastellux—were straying off the beaten track of objectivism. With Diderot form was a necessary element of art, not the adventitious cloak that, according to the Cartesians²³ and even some representatives of the "philosophic spirit," obscured reason and hindered its communication. He wrote in the *Réflexions sur Terence* (1762):

"Je conviens qu'où il n'y a point de chose, il ne peut y avoir de style; mais je ne conçois pas comment on peut ôter au style sans ôter à la chose. Si un pédant s'empare d'un raisonnement de Cicéron ou de Démosthène, et qu'il le réduise en un syllogisme...., serait-il en droit de prétendre qu'il n'a fait que supprimer des mots, sans avoir altéré le fond? L'homme de goût lui répondra: Eh! qu'est devenue cette harmonie qui me séduisait? Comment se sont évanouies ces images, qui m'assaillaient en foule, et qui me troublaient? Et ces expressions, tantôt délicates, tantôt énergiques, qui réveillaient dans mon esprit je ne sais combien d'idées accessoires...qui tenaient mon âme agitée d'une suite presque

²⁰ Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, pt. I, sect. I, ch. 2; sect. II, ch. III-IV. Cf. especially Hume's *Enquiry concerning the human understanding*, sect. II; *Treatise of human nature*, book I, pt. I.

²¹ VII, 333 ff.

²² Cf. II, 145, 178 ff.

²³ I, 188 f., XI, 134, etc. Cf. the esthetics of Alison, Quatremère de Quincy, Taine, Séailles, etc.

²⁴ The Port-Royalists, Berkeley, even Condillac, ascribed the materialization of expression to the fall of man.

ininterrompue de sensations diverses, et qui formaient cet impétueux ouragan qui la soulevait à son gré; je ne les retrouve plus."²⁴

Rhythm, harmony, metaphor cannot be altered with impunity since, "strictly speaking, when the style is good, there is not a single word but has a function to perform; and a word that has a function to perform stands for something, and something so essential that, if for the proper expression its nearest synonym be substituted, or even the proper expression for its synonym, the meaning conveyed will sometimes be the very opposite of that intended by the orator or poet."²⁵ Matter and form, contents and expression, achieve, as it were, a substantial union. Art is *homo additus naturae*, at once subjective and objective. "Poetry" and "eloquence" are to a certain extent "exaggeration and falsehood";²⁶ yet they are *the* interesting thing in art and its soul. It is to them that art is indebted for its suggestiveness and perennial novelty. It is they that energize, amplify, modify and emotionalize nature.

In the *Rêve de d'Alembert* (1769) Diderot goes so far as to compare the poet to a musical instrument which "is either self-winding or wound up by some extraneous cause. It then vibrates within or resounds without; it silently records the impressions it receives, or causes them to burst out, as sounds in a scale (*par des sons convenus*)."²⁷ The artist's account, pregnant with "accessory ideas" of subjective origin, is "poetic or historical." (This last word is taken in its highest sense.) Yet Diderot falls short of subjectivism and expressionism owing to his conviction that, in the words of Matthew Arnold, the artist must subordinate expression to that which it is designed to express. His intimate conviction was that, unlike the madman, the great artist perceives real "*rappports*," that is to say truth, however fragmentary, and all the process of distortion to which his imagination subjects nature is directed to

²⁴ v, 235 (*Réflexions sur Tércence*, 1762).

²⁵ v, 236. Cf. xi, 267 ff., 326 ff. etc.

²⁶ xi, 401 (*Salon de 1769*). Cf. iii, 486 (*Plan d'une université*, 1775-76).

²⁷ ii, 178.

reinforce his impression, and enforce its truth upon us." As the "ends" of poetry are not entirely arbitrary, the images and ideas of the artist find an echo in the minds and hearts of the public.

To sum up, "poetry or untruth" never quite loses (or at least ought not to lose) contact with nature. Diderot tells us this in *les Deux amis de Bourbonne* (1770) in which the juxtaposition, already noted, of the natural and extraordinary is paralleled by a compensatory formula which regulates the flights of fancy. The historical narrator (the word "historical" is here synonymous with "poetic") aims at truth; he wishes to compel belief; but he also seeks to interest, touch, move to pity and terror—

"effet qu'on n'obtient point sans éloquence et sans poésie. Mais l'éloquence est une sorte de mensonge; et rien de plus contraire à l'illusion que la poésie; l'une et l'autre exagèrent, surfont, amplifient, inspirent la méfiance; comment s'y prendra donc ce conteur-ci pour tromper? Le voici. Il parsèmera son récit de petites circonstances si liées à la chose, de traits si simples, si naturels, et toutefois si difficiles à imaginer, que vous serez forcé de vous dire en vous même: Ma foi, cela est vrai: on n'invente pas ces choses-là. C'est ainsi qu'il sauvera l'exagération de l'éloquence et de la poésie; que la vérité de la nature couvrira le prestige de l'art; et qu'il satisfera à deux conditions qui semblent contradictoires, d'être en même temps historien et poète, véridique et menteur."²⁰

Diderot prescribed that energetic characterization and stylistic blandishments must be linked with the prosaic and jejune²¹ in a chain wherein each element controls its neighbors, as the nexus of fact and hypothesis does in the "systematic" interpretation of nature. For in this way the poet "will redeem the exaggeration of eloquence and poetry; the truth of nature will cover the magic spell of art; and he will satisfy two seem-

²⁰ xi, 293 (*Salon de 1767*).

²¹ v, 276 f. Cf. v, 217, 218 (*Eloge de Richardson*, 1761).

²² Cf. xii, 120 f.

ingly contradictory requirements, being at once historian and poet, truthful and deceptive."³¹

Atque ita mentitur, sic veris falsa remiscet,
Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum.³²

This system of checks and balances is completed by the opposition of "taste" and "genius," the organs involved in artistic creation.³³ Owing to his ambiguous use of the words "*goût*," "*esprit*," and "*génie*" or "*verve*," Diderot's meaning can be established only by carefully piecing together a great many of his utterances. When this is done, it will be seen that by "taste" he designates, among other things, the methodic, critical and educable faculty habitually accompanying "judgment" and eliminative of individual details and which apprehends "universal" and "eternal" beauty, i. e., *good* taste upholding certain formal standards of beauty. As such it stands in contrast to "genius," the intuitive, creative, spontaneous and unstandardized faculty which is dependent upon "sensitivity" and "imagination" while transcending their ordinary manifestations, and which appreciates and creates "unusual," "pathetic," "strong," "sublime," "irregular," and "negligent" beauties, "bizarre and violent situations," and "seems to change the nature of things" which it tries to shape to its whims and desires.³⁴ Now, wit and judgment often are at strife and "*la verve se laisse rarement maîtriser par le goût*." But for all that "it does not exclude it" and conversely. For, aside from the fact that Diderot constantly confuses the functions of the two organs, not only is there a "*goût de l'homme de génie*," which divines and creates permanent ideals, but on a more modest scale, every act of artistic creation may be regarded as the joint product of these two antagonistic organs, one of which makes for regularity, generality, or, if you prefer, ideality, while the other is con-

³¹ v, 277.

³² *De arte poetica*, v. 151 f.

³³ Cf. iii, 485 (*Plan d'une université*); iv, 26 f. (*Fragm. s. le génie*); v, 233 f. (*Réfl. sur l'ode*); x, 519 (*Essai sur la peinture*); xi, 25, 130 f. (*Réfl. sur l'ode*); xii, 75 ff., 105 (*Pensées détachées sur la peinture*, etc.); xiv, 425 (*"Encyclopédie"*); xv, 35 ff. (*"Génie"*); xix, 117 (à Mlle Volland, Sept. 2, 1762); etc. V. *infra*, subchapter vi.

³⁴ Cf. Hugo's antithesis of the grotesque and sublime.

cerned in individualizing, in bringing out the characteristic, accidental and irregular. Imagine a painted head, says Diderot in *les Deux amis de Bourbonne*. All its lines are strong, grand and regular; it forms the rarest and most perfect whole. "J'éprouve, en le considérant, du respect, de l'admiration, de l'effroi. J'en cherche le modèle dans la nature, et ne l'y trouve pas; en comparaison tout est faible, petit et mesquin; c'est une tête idéale; je le sens, je me le dis." Now let the artist mark on its forehead a slight scar and paint a wart on the temple. From ideal, the painting has become a portrait. It is no longer Venus, but my neighbor. Only now do I become really interested.³⁵ As the poet has said:

A ces petits défauts marqués dans sa peinture
L'esprit avec plaisir reconnaît la nature.

We are now in a position to understand the somewhat cryptic soliloquy of Ariste³⁶ which ends the treatise *De la Poésie dramatique* and which, purporting as it does to yield the fruit of Diderot's deepest meditations concerning the nature of ideal beauty in general, is also of capital importance for his dramatic theory in particular. The monologue begins with an enumeration of the main causes of the uncertainty of our ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty. With no two men absolutely alike in physical organization, education, mode of living, social status, etc., and with every individual undergoing continual "revolutions," how can one speak of a constant standard of taste or universal notions concerning beauty? Happily, faith in the existence of natural laws and in the inductive and deductive methods of science saves Ariste, who is Diderot himself, from thoroughgoing scepticism. A "module hors de moi" and in function of the constant elements of nature may be employed as a working hypothesis and provisional "models" of beauty, valid for large groups of men, may be framed. We say "models" advisedly, for the existence of *one* single "modèle général idéal de toute perfection" is a chimera. Hoping to approach absolute

³⁵ v, 277; cf. xi, 151 (*Salon de 1767*).

³⁶ vii, 390-394. (It may have originated about 1753).

perfection with the progress of knowledge, let each "condition" (writers, philosophers, etc.) provisionally frame their own model, even as the Greek sculptors had done." (For we may surmise that "taste," now usually busy imitating existing works of art, was with the early artists engaged in observing and copying Nature when it still retained its primitive and wholesome simplicity and regularity. But this is anticipating Diderot's esthetic of the plastic arts):

"Que l'homme de lettres se fasse un modèle idéal de l'homme de lettres le plus accompli, et que ce soit par la bouche de cet homme qu'il juge les productions des autres et les siennes. Que le philosophe suive le même plan" (vii, 393).

These models are then to be modified, and systematically distorted (no irony is here intended) according to circumstances. The student, for example, will have round shoulders, the porter strong loins, the pregnant woman will tilt her head backward, etc. The significance of these statements will appear when we speak of the theatre of "conditions."

"Voilà les observations qui multipliées à l'infini, forment le statuaire, et lui apprennent à altérer, fortifier, affaiblir, défigurer et réduire son modèle idéal, de l'état de nature à tel autre état qu'il lui plaît. C'est l'étude des passions, des mœurs, des caractères, des usages, qui apprendra au peintre de l'homme à altérer son modèle et à le réduire de l'état d'homme à celui d'homme bon ou méchant, tranquille ou colère. C'est ainsi que d'un seul simulacre il émanera une variété infinie de représentations différentes qui couvriront la scène ou la toile" (vii, 393 f.)

We have reached the *Ultima Thule* of Diderot's poetics and what do we discover? An absolute, or quasi-absolute "model of beauty," an ideal substratum, reminiscent of Nature's pristine estate, even though distorted in its material exemplifications by a consequent series of modifications which lend it individuality, character and passion. Or, again, if one should prefer to start with the concrete or particular, Diderot might

" Cf. xiii, 75; viii, 390; x, 12, 14-16.

tell him that "le beau n'est que le vrai relevé par des circonstances possibles, mais rares et merveilleuses."²⁸ Diderot was everywhere minded to balance art with nature, "lie" with truth, imitation with expression, wit with genius, reason with sentiment, the subjective with the objective. He may be called with equal propriety a Classicist and a Romanticist. Yet his most appropriate appellation is, perhaps, that of ideo-realist. This would recognize the dualistic nature of his beliefs and emphasize the predominance of the realistic moment. Diderot the sensualist, evolutionist, and vitalist, could not help being more interested in the "*verrue*" than in general man, more attracted by the protean and exuberant manifestations of passion than by rigidly correct and inexpressive "models." In spite of much he had in common with the Classicists, he would not have fully acknowledged the traditional aims of dramatic art, for instance, those proclaimed by Rapin:

"La vérité ne fait les choses que comme elles sont, et le vraisemblable les fait comme elles doivent être. La vérité est presque toujours défectueuse, par le mélange des conditions singulières qui la composent. Il ne naît rien au monde qui ne s'éloigne de la perfection de son idée en y naissant. Il faut chercher des originaux et des modèles dans le vraisemblable, et dans les principes universels des choses, où il n'entre rien de matériel qui les corrompe. C'est par là que les portraits de l'histoire sont moins parfaits que les portraits de la poésie" (Rapin, *op. cit.*, II, 137).

The *Entretiens* and *De la Poésie dramatique* are, on the contrary, nothing if not a continual reminder to the dramatic "poet" to imitate the procedure of the painter of *genre*, to substitute as far as possible nature for art, to set the "*naïf*"—life itself—on his canvas. Even later, in the *Salon* of 1767 and the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, when the *retour à l'antique* brought with it the *gran gusto* and Platonism, and Diderot turned his attention to historical tragedy and history painting, it was not the abstract *ideal* which fascinated Diderot but the individual portrait and picturesque *reality*.

²⁸ xii, 125.

V

THE "POETICS" OF THE "DRAMA OF CONDITIONS" IS A
CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF DIDEROT'S
GENERAL POETICS

Besides obeying the laws of *general* poetics, the dramatic *genre*, in its totality as well as in its most representative part, "drama" proper, has also laws of its own. Diderot nowhere systematically differentiated dramatic poetry from the principal *genres* of narrative poetry, *i. e.*, epic and pastoral, and from the novel. It is easy to see, however, that the "*merveilleux*" predominates in the epic and pastoral, which are therefore beyond the scope of our discussion. Aside from its indirect method of presentation—it paints for the imagination instead of the eye—the novel differs from the drama by its "romantic veneer," its complacency in events more improbable, more protracted, more complicated and more loosely held together than those of the drama, which hastily progresses to a more or less tragic end.¹ A good novel, says Diderot, need not make a good dramatic poem; but one may always expect a good drama to be turned into a superior novel. It is most likely that Diderot distinguished between the *comédie larmoyante* which was frequently based on an improbable novel of adventure and his own "*drame*," which might be considered the culmination and condensation of a novel in the manner of Richardson. Yet it is certain that, without Diderot's being aware of it, "*le vernis romanesque*" is laid thickly in his own dramas and that he had a pronounced bias toward melodrama.

Coming to the special "poetics" of the dramatic *genre* we need not deal at length with the laws which drama shares with "poesy" in general. Some of these laws, that of verisimilitude for example, must be more heeded by the dramatist than by his fellow artists. (The burlesque and fantastic are, of course, disregarded in our discussion.) In the *Bijoux indiscrets*, Dide-

¹ Cf. vii, 330, 88, 156, 349; iv, 285; vi, 43, 239; v, 220, 221. Cf. *Corr. litt.*, ii, 333 f., 377 (of Mme de Graffigny); Beaumarchais, *Ess. s. le genre dramatique*; and Mercier, *Du Théâtre*, p. 106, 140.

rot had demanded "so exact an imitation of action that the continually deceived spectator would imagine he is witnessing real facts." The *Entretiens* and *De la poésie* are equally categorical; actions, characters, scenery, acting, declamation, must faithfully imitate real life:

"Des habits vrais, des discours vrais, une intrigue simple et naturelle" (vii, 120).

"Il n'y a rien de ce qui se passe dans le monde qui ne puisse avoir lieu sur la scène" (vii, 378).

"La maîtresse de Barnwell entre échevelée dans la prison de son amant. Les deux amis s'embrassent et tombent à terre. Philoctète se roulait autrefois à l'entrée de sa caverne. Il y faisait entendre les cris inarticulés de la douleur. Ces cris formaient un vers peu nombreux; mais les entrailles du spectateur en étaient déchirées. Avons-nous plus de délicatesse et plus de génie que les Athéniens?" (vii, 95 f.)

As a rule, Diderot speaks as if no selection need be made of the "nature" that is to be represented dramatically. Certainly, no emotion can be strong enough: he dreamed of "giving torture to the spectator, as it were."² Collé said of Saurin's drama, *Béverlei*, that "elle attache, mais elle n'intéresse nullement. On n'y est point attendri, mais oppressé; on n'y pleurt pas, on étouffe; on en sort avec le cauchemar."³ He found in it a "peinture trop vraie et par cette raison trop effrayante et trop révoltante." To this Diderot would have surely retorted: "Qu'ils se fassent à ces émotions-là!"

Moi.—Qui sait si nous irions chercher au théâtre des impressions aussi fortes? On veut être attendri, touché, effrayé; mais jusqu'à un certain point.

Dorval.—Pour juger sainement, expliquons-nous, Quel est l'objet d'une composition dramatique?

Moi.—C'est, je crois, d'inspirer aux hommes l'amour de la vertu, l'horreur du vice...

Dorval.—Ainsi, dire qu'il ne faut les émouvoir que jusqu'à un certain point, c'est prétendre qu'il ne faut qu'ils

² vii, 96, 149, 314.

³ Collé, *Journal et mémoires*, ed. Bonhomme, III, 95.

sortent d'un spectacle, trop épris de la vertu, trop éloignés du vice. Il n'y aurait point de poétique pour un peuple qui serait aussi pusillanime. Que serait-ce que le goût; et que l'art deviendrait-il, si l'on se refusait à son énergie, et si l'on posait des barrières arbitraires à ses effets?" (vii, 148 f.)

Yet Diderot is not a naturalist in the sense in which we apply this term to the author of *Thérèse Raquin*. Perhaps we ought to say that, like Zola and M. Antoine, he was less of a libertarian than he thought. Diderot explicitly admits, to begin with, that

"La vérité...est souvent froide comme elle est commune et plate... S'il faut être vrai, c'est comme Molière, Regnard, Richardson, Sedaine; la vérité a ses côtés piquants, qu'on saisit quand on a du génie" (vi, 43, *Jacques le Fataliste*).

More than any other poet, the dramatist must try and "extend the sphere of our pleasures,"⁴ he must select not only "les sensations les plus fortes" but also "les plus agréables." Diderot recognized that the disgusting and atrocious must be placed in a poetic light before they are acceptable to art; that artistic verisimilitude is something beyond mere truth to fact. There are things, moreover, which the dramatist may allude to—thus turning narrative poet—but cannot resurrect before our eyes, because our senses will react to the physical, instead of the esthetic, impression. Some things must be accentuated, others toned down when transported from real life on to the stage. This is why, in spite of his professed libertarianism, Diderot could beg of Voltaire not to place a scaffold on the stage:

"On dit que Mlle Clairon demande un échafaud dans la décoration; ne le souffrez pas, morbleu! Cest peut être une belle chose en soi; mais si le génie élève jamais une potence sur la scène, bientôt les imitateurs y accrocheront le pendu en personne" (xix, 459, November 28, 1760).

⁴ vii, 151.

⁵ vii, 312. Cf. x, 492 (*Essai sur la peinture*, about 1765); xi, 173 (*Salon de 1767*).

"Il y a de la différence entre la plaisanterie de théâtre et la plaisanterie de société. Celle-ci serait trop faible sur la scène, et n'y ferait aucun effet, l'autre serait trop dure dans le monde, et elle offenserait. Le cynisme, si odieux, si incommode dans la société, est excellent sur la scène" (vii, 363; cf. viii, 389).

"Si un valet parle sur la scène comme dans la société il est maussade; s'il parle autrement il est faux" (vii, 137).

Nay, interesting reality and the "verisimilar" (in the physical sense) may look shabby when carried to the stage; they may not appear poetic enough. Diderot says as much in the *Troisième entretien* when he advises the dramatist to paint for the imagination, that is to say, relate those incidents which cannot produce "illusion" when directly presented.⁶ Racine did this in the last act of *Iphigénie*.⁷ No actor, be he ever so gifted, could personate the frenzied Calchas, his hair bristling on his head in the terrible attitude suggested by the poet. No artificial spectacle could conjure up, as does the poet's account, the light of day obscured by the multitude of darts of a whole army in tumult, the earth besprinkled with blood, a princess with a poniard thrust in her breast, the winds unleashed, the skies ablaze with lightning, a foaming and roaring sea. Even if the audience could be made to see them, these things would contrast with the prosaic realism of the rest of the spectacle, to the detriment of verisimilitude. This example is taken from the "tragédie connue, je ne peux tirer mes exemples d'un genre qui n'existe pas encore parmi nous." *A fortiori*, the principles he defends hold true of the more realistic "tragédie domestique."

The truth of the theatre, like that of "poetry" in general, is hypothetical, truth of impression or "illusion" entailing a certain amount of "intellectual exaggeration."⁸ It falls short of verism and admits of conventions:

"Je vous ai lu [Diderot tells Dorval, the supposed author of *Le Fils naturel*]; mais je suis bien trompé, ou vous ne vous êtes pas attaché à répondre scrupuleusement

⁶ vii, 147 f.

⁷ Act V, sc. 7.

⁸ vii, 148.

aux intentions de monsieur votre père. Il vous avait recommandé, ce me semble, de rendre les choses comme elles s'étaient passées; et j'en ai remarqué plusieurs qui ont un caractère de fiction qui n'en impose qu'au théâtre, où l'on dirait qu'il y a une illusion et des applaudissements de convention. D'abord vous vous êtes asservi à la loi des unités..." (vii, 87).

Dorval admitted that so many events could not all happen in the same place, within twenty-four hours, and in exactly the same sequence as in the play. But, he asked in turn:

"... Si le fait a duré quinze jours, croyez-vous qu'il fallût accorder la même durée à la représentation? Si les événements en ont été séparés par d'autres, qu'il était à propos de rendre cette confusion? Et s'ils se sont passés en différents endroits de la maison, que je devais aussi les répandre sur le même espace?" (vii, 87).

In life, continues Dorval, our actions constitute a series of rather insignificant incidents, which a novel may reproduce, but which, admitted upon the stage, would kill all interest in the play. "Au théâtre, où l'on ne représente que des instants particuliers de la vie réelle, il faut que nous y soyons tout entiers à la même chose."⁹ The "laws of three unities" are therefore "reasonable (*sensées*)," although difficult to observe.¹⁰ And Diderot would see them introduced even in the opera.

"Je serais fâché d'avoir pris quelque licence contraire à ces principes généraux de l'unité de temps et de l'unité d'action, et je pense qu'on ne peut être trop sévère sur l'unité de lieu. Sans cette unité, la conduite d'une pièce est presque toujours embarrassée, louche" (vii, 88).

Nature is diverse but a work of art must be one. "Rien n'est beau s'il n'est un."¹¹ Diderot is very prodigal of unities. Besides the famous three and that of interest, there is, for instance, the unity of "color"; "C'est le premier incident qui décidera de la couleur de l'ouvrage entier."¹² This may or may not be the same as the important unity of impression which is specific to each *genre*. Then, there are in the personages of

⁹ vii, 88.

¹⁰ vii, 87.

¹¹ vii, 347.

¹² vii, 347.

the drama lesser unities of tone, character, accent. In short, in a play "tout est enchainé"—practically Taine's principle of convergence of effects.

Unfortunately, in so numerous and nondescript a company the classical unities lose caste. In characteristic fashion, after having proclaimed them, Diderot set about to undermine them, beginning with the best entrenched, the unity of place. Like La Motte before and Hugo after him, he paid tribute of scorn to a stage in which courtiers conspire against the ruler in the very hall to which they have been called by him. Since the *dramatis personae* remain, sneeringly remarks Diderot, we are asked to imagine that the place has gone. Would we had a stage in which "the setting would change whenever the action must change."¹¹ Elsewhere he wishes for a stage in which two actions, in different settings, could be simultaneously reproduced.¹² The unity of time is even less binding. We have already seen that the unity of impression permitted the admixture of joy and sadness. The unity of action, too, was bound to suffer at the hands of Diderot, owing to his secret predilection for very complicated plots and biographic details. Nor did he wax enthusiastic over the unity of character;¹³ he admits the possibility of character development in the complex drama. Let us conclude that, as long as regularity was necessary to a system which was to enter the sanctum of the Comédie-Française, it was professed *ad hoc*; but that while Diderot considered organic unity to be essential to a drama or to any other work of art, he had neither "undue respect nor undue contempt" for the classic "unities."

We may also note here another manifestation of Diderot's realism, namely his rejection of the supernatural, Christian and pagan: "Il y a trop peu de foi sur la terre. Et puis, nos diables sont d'une figure is gothique, de si mauvais goût." "Le sortilège," "la superstition nationale," deny truth of fact—"l'ordre universel des choses, qui doit servir de base à la raison poétique." Accordingly, they are out of place, even on the lyric

¹¹ vii, 88.

¹² vii, 116.

¹³ vii, 369.

stage.²⁶ Are not these affirmations dictated by extra-esthetical considerations? And why did our philosopher admit Christian and pagan miracles to pictorial representation? It is difficult to answer with certainty. It is probable, however, that in sanctioning as he did the supernatural in painting,²⁷ Diderot merely acknowledged a *fait accompli*; on the other hand, putting religion on the stage might entail dangerous consequences from the Philosophers' point of view. Furthermore, he may have believed that, owing to its less material medium, painting is better suited for the representation of events which are real only in the minds of believers, for theatrical "machines" are coarse things and too suggestive of deceit.

Diderot's endeavors in behalf of realistic representation of vehement passions led to his preconizing the lavish employment of dumb scenes and picturesque "*tableaux*" in lieu of romanesque "*coups de théâtre*" and unnatural "*tirades*."²⁸ Great passions, said Diderot, are silent or monosyllabic; their rhetoric is confined to a few sentences or fragments of sentences, said over and over. (He was also thinking of the lyric theatre of Metastasio.) Not only might the silent moments, so numerous in the drama of passion, be filled up with expressive mimicry; but dumb scenes could be employed simultaneously or alternately with the spoken, to enhance dramatic effect and speed the progress of action. Diderot employed this scenic method—unfortunately with ludicrous result—in his "tragic" version of *le Fils naturel*.²⁹

He demanded of the dramatic poet always to visualize his scenes before writing them down.

"Pour moi, je ne conçois pas comment le poète peut commencer une scène, s'il n'imagine pas l'action et le mouvement du personnage qu'il introduit; si sa démarche et son masque ne lui sont pas présents. C'est ce simulacre qui inspire le premier mot, et le premier mot donne le reste" (vii, 360; cf. 386).

²⁶ vii, 155, 157; viii, 474 (review of *Hamlet*, translated by Ducis).

²⁷ Cf. x, 492.

²⁸ vii, 94, 105, 116, 145.

²⁹ vii, 141 ff.

The "tableaux" Diderot makes so much of are the application to pantomime of the "laws of picturesque composition." According to him, it is absurd to say they retard dramatic action. Had Diderot lived to see the photoplay he would have hailed it as something he had predicted and wished for:

"Ah! si nous avions des théâtres où la décoration changeât toutes les fois que le lieu de la scène doit changer!" (vii, 88).

"Si le spectateur est au théâtre comme devant une toile, où des tableaux divers se succéderaient par enchantement, pourquoi le philosophe qui s'assied sur les pieds du lit de Socrate, et qui craint de le voir mourir, ne serait-il pas aussi pathétique sur la scène, que la femme et la fille d'Eudamidas dans le tableau de Poussin? Appliquez les lois de la composition pittoresque à la pantomime et vous verrez que ce sont les mêmes... Mais je jette ces vues pour ma satisfaction particulière et la vôtre. Je ne pense pas que nous aimions jamais assez les spectacles pour en venir là" (vii, 385).

Diderot exhibited some embarrassment as to the dramatic vehicle of expression. He asked himself whether domestic tragedy might not be written in verse. Though he answered No, he owned he was at a loss for a good reason. It is difficult, however, to believe that none such was contained in the questions he asked in this connection, especially in the last two:

"La vérité du sujet et la violence de l'intérêt rejetteraient-elles un langage symétrisé? La condition des personnages serait-elle trop voisine de la nôtre, pour admettre une harmonie régulière?" (vii, 332).

Most "dramaturgists"* did not hesitate to avail themselves of these arguments to recommend prose as the legitimate medium of dramatic expression. It is therefore all the more remarkable that Diderot should have evinced some hesitation in adopting them. He must have seen an alternative to the exclusive em-

* Beaumarchais, *Essai sur le genre dram. sérieux*; Mercier, *Du Théâtre*, ch. 26; de Falbaire, *Pref. to le Fabricant de Londres*; Sedaine, *Pref. to Maillard*. Cf. Gaiffe, *le Drame*, p. 483 ff.

ployment of prose form since he asked: "Ce genre exigerait-il un style particulier dont je n'ai pas la notion?" As these words would not fit the verse of lyric *coupe* and varying number of syllables which some of Diderot's fellow-dramatists employed, it is not unlikely that he had some hazy notion of a sort of *vers libre* or "*poésie rythmique*"²¹ resembling now the verse of Metastasio, now the blank verse of Shakespeare, now poetic prose, according to personages and dramatic situations. This conjecture is upheld by what Grimm says in a paper in the *Correspondance littéraire* of 1767.²² He there pretends to settle an anticipated quarrel between Diderot and Saint-Lambert as to whether prose is more suitable than verse for the "*drame sérieux*." The odds are in favor of Diderot's agreeing to Grimm's contention that

"Il ne peut pas être question s'il faut écrire les pièces de théâtre en prose, lorsque dans une langue la poésie peut avoir tous les avantages de la prose combinés avec les avantages qui lui sont propres. Il est visible qu'il faut donner alors la préférence à la poésie."

When poetry has the simplicity, facility, flexibility, concision, naturalness and rapidity of prose it should be preferred, but not otherwise:

"Je serais bien fâché que Metastasio eût écrit de la prose, je serais bien fâché que Térence n'eût pas écrit en vers, mais quels vers!" (*Corr. litt.*, vii, 415).

Who can doubt, Grimm went on, that French comic poetry, even in its best representative, Regnard, is too ornate, too verbose, too symmetrical, too epic in short,²³ to constitute good dramatic poetry? Not Diderot, we are sure. And we may surmise that, like Grimm, he was not loath to employ verse in the "dramatic poem," provided the verse was as natural and poetic as he conceived his own prose to be. The following lines from the *Second entretien* do not contradict our hypothesis:

²¹ Cf. vi, 336.

²² *Corr. litt.*, vii, 415 f. (Sept. 15, 1767); cf. *ibid.*, viii, 460 ff. (Feb. 15, 1770).

²³ Cf. also Diderot, viii, 406.

"Les Anglais ont le *Marchand de Londres* et le *Joueur*, tragédies en prose. Les tragédies de Shakespeare sont moitié vers et moitié prose. Le premier poète qui nous fit rire avec de la prose, introduisit la prose dans la comédie. Le premier poète qui nous fera pleurer avec de la prose, introduira la prose dans la tragédie" (vii, 120).

But whilst Grimm was for *vers libre*, Mercier, on the other hand, recommended to the dramatists the "poetry" of *Télémaque* and *la Nouvelle Héloïse*; and his point of view was shared by Marmontel.²⁴ This is not surprising in view of the success of the doctrine of poetic prose in the eighteenth century.²⁵ The two solutions, that of Mercier and that of Grimm, are not mutually exclusive, and were probably reconciled by Diderot who had an exquisite feeling for the vague and touching intimations conveyed by poetic harmony and regarded rhyme as a secondary character of poetry.²⁶ Diderot would not have been at a loss to justify a more exalted and lyrical style of dramatic expression than ordinary prose. "Nothing makes one so eloquent as misfortune,"²⁷ said he, and Beaumarchais added in Diderotian vein that the style of a personage in mortal danger is a little greater than nature. Moreover, passion speaks the language of nature, which is lyrical, according to Diderot. After all, it is likely that he owned with Grimm and in anticipation of Hugo, that genius knows which form best suits its efforts.

It would be idle to go through the whole of the "poetics" of the serious *genre*. Diderot's proscription of the traditional comic valets,²⁸—"Sont-ce les mœurs qu'on avait il y a deux mille ans ou les nôtres, qu'il faut imiter?"—the details of his views as to costume, decoration and acting, though quite welcome in their time, afford no new theoretical principles. Diderot's remarks on the *proprium* of drama and tragedy, *i. e.*, the

²⁴ On Marmontel, cf. V. Lenel, *Marmontel* (Paris, 1902), p. 338 ff., B. Petermann, *Der Streit um Vers und Prosa* (Berlin, 1913), p. 69 ff.

²⁵ D. Mornet, in *Rev. d'Hist. Litt.*, xxi (1914), p. 593. Cf. his *Sentiment de la nature en France* (Paris, 1907), p. 408 ff.

²⁶ Cf. vii, 328, 332; xi, 331.

²⁷ vii, 113.

²⁸ Cf. vii, 137, 90.

tragic or dramatic conflict are of greater interest. Unfortunately, they are made in passing and the prevailing confusion between the drama in general, serious comedy, *bourgeoise* and heroic tragedy does not make for clearness.

Diderot established as a general observation that "if there is anything touching, it is the sight of a man rendered unhappy or guilty through no fault of his own." Fate and the gods were the agents of perdition known to ancient tragedy. Men take their place in the modern. Yet he was no believer in *Schicksalsstragödie*:

"Il faut que les hommes fassent, dans la comédie, le rôle que font les dieux dans la tragédie. La fatalité et la méchanceté, voilà, dans l'un et l'autre genre, les bases de l'intérêt dramatique" (vii, 330).

The true dramatic situation, we are once told, is that in which all the incidents add to the misfortune of a principal personage who is "gémissant et passif; c'est lui qui parle, et ce sont les autres qui agissent."²⁹ Diderot may have had in mind his own *Père de famille* when he wrote these lines. But the protagonist of his historic tragedy *Térentia* is anything but a lachrymose and passive character. It may be that Diderot was led to formulate this too absolute rule by his conviction that "movement is always detrimental to dignity, wherefore the chief dramatic character should but seldom be the '*machiniste*' of the play."³⁰ Yet his theory of "*conditions*" makes it plausible that what Diderot really meant was that the tragic situation *par excellence* is that of a man, good at heart, but worsted in the conflict with his social environment. The hero need not be altogether passive in the contest, although he will suffer in it and react against situations rather than originate them.

Diderot says very little about the ethics of tragic conflict beyond what we have already noted. It may be worth mentioning, however, that in the article "*Beau*," he ascribed to the "Hutchesonians" certain propositions in which, he says, everybody concurred, *viz.*, that by a moral character Aristotle did

²⁹ vii, 356.

³⁰ viii, 38.

not mean a virtuous person; that a *fabula bene morata* is an epic or dramatic poem in which action, sentiments, and speeches agree with the characters, good or evil. Yet goodness pleases in itself, and should be given preference.

"La seule exception qu'il y ait peut être à cette règle c'est le cas où la conformité de la peinture avec l'état du spectateur gagnant tout ce qu'on ôte à la beauté absolue du modèle, la peinture en devient d'autant plus intéressante; cet intérêt qui naît de l'imperfection, est la raison pour laquelle on a voulu que le héros d'un poème épique ou héroïque ne soit pas sans défaut" (x, 16).

In short, Diderot admits in his heroes a moral "verrue" on a basis of primitive and natural goodness,²¹ but he prefers to see in serious comedy "the trials and sorrows of virtue," and in domestic tragedy its despair. Here too he pointed the way to the melodrama.

A tragic situation attains its maximum of energy and effect in conjunction with a carefully laid out plot. Diderot enjoined the dramatist to begin by sketching his "plan" or plot²² and distinguished between the simple and the complex plot. He paid his tribute of admiration to the simple tragedies of the ancients. Yet he was also pleased with, and perhaps secretly preferred, the complex,²³ in which the characters act instead of developing, speeches are scanty and numerous incidents make for interest and rapidity. (We have in fact an *imbroglio* of Diderot's which is past comprehension.)

Whether the plot be simple or complex, the great law of determinism consistently applied supplies the proper motivations of dramatic incidents and suggests some of the situations. The next step in the construction of a drama after the plot is outlined is characterization, which, as shown later, is made by keeping in mind the situations the dramatic personages are to be placed in and their "*conditions*." Moreover, on the stage, as in real life, each personage has his own way of pursuing his inte-

²¹ vii, 131.

²² vii, 332. Cf. Aristotle to whom Diderot refers.

²³ Cf. Beaumarchais' *drame mixte*, (Pref. to *La Mère coupable*); V. Gaiffe, *op. cit.*, p. 464.

rests and a "ton" of his own, indicative of the "*passion dominante*" and showing in everything he or she says. Dorval, for instance, "avait le ton de la mélancolie; Constance, le ton de la raison; Rosalie, celui de l'ingénuité; Clairville, celui de la passion, moi [Diderot], celui de la bonhomie."³⁴ Character should inspire the "*mots de caractère*."³⁵ In fact, "les caractères étant donnés, les discours sont uns." Diderot attached importance also to the *cris de profession*, which "often disguise the accent of character."—The scenario and character being determined, the dramatist must next write his scenes in order, from first to last. Keeping order is essential, since in art, as in nature, that which precedes must determine what follows. If the action progresses through the necessity of characters and circumstances, dramatic effect is assured; interest is increased if the outcome of the tragic conflict is expected.³⁶ As we see, Diderot took to heart the lesson of Aristotle according to whom the plot was the seed and also the end of tragedy.

This brings us at last to the principal dramatic innovation of Diderot, his substitution, or rather subordination and opposition of "*caractère*" to "*condition*," a formula which calls for some preliminary explanation.

Diderot sought to justify the secondary rôle he assigned to character by denying the existence of original types in the society of his time. "Une assimilation qui brouille tous les rangs, l'uniformité nationale, voilà la raison pour laquelle la comédie est difficile à faire parmi nous." Under such circumstances Diderot felt that he was rendering a genuine service to dramatic artists in inviting them to take cognizance of social functions, constantly multiplied by the increasing complexity of society.³⁷ Keeping to the beaten track of character-painting entailed either loss of originality—the basic characters are very few in number³⁸ and had already been staged—or else waste of

³⁴ vii, 168.

³⁵ vi, 303, 306 (*Satire I, sur les Caractères*).

³⁶ vii, 341.

³⁷ vii, 151.

³⁸ vii, 149. Cf. Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XIV*, ch. 32; d'Alembert held the same view.

the artists' energy on shades and details, on the surface of things instead of their philosophic depth. Above all, the comedy of "*conditions*" is more efficacious morally:

"Pour peu que le caractère fût chargé, un spectateur pouvait se dire à lui-même, ce n'est pas moi. Mais il ne peut se cacher que l'état qu'on joue devant lui ne soit le sien; il ne peut méconnaître ses devoirs. Il faut absolument qu'il s'applique ce qu'il entend" (vii, 150. Cf. *supra*, subchapter iii).

But these considerations are too general to go to the heart of the matter. Diderot starts out with the following two basic axioms:

"C'est aux situations à décider des caractères. Le plan d'un drame peut être fait et bien fait, sans que le poète sache rien encore du caractère qu'il attachera à ses personnages" (vii, 347).

Characterization in the drama exists for the sake of dramatic situations. While novelists might paint character portraits, dramatists ought never to forget that the business proper of drama is dramatic action. Hitherto, dramatic authors (notably Destouches) had abused the contrast of character, without noticing that too evident a contrast is unnatural and detrimental to the unity of a play.³⁹ A truer and more dramatic opposition is that of character to situation.

"Le véritable contraste, c'est celui des caractères avec les situations; c'est celui des intérêts avec les intérêts. Si vous rendez Alceste amoureux que ce soit d'une coquette, Harpagon, d'une fille pauvre" (vii, 348).

Now, one of the most frequent situations people find themselves in is the discharge of social and professional duties. Diderot employs the word "*condition*" to designate the various social functions, i. e., professions, social station and family relationships.⁴⁰ Accordingly, the axiom, "C'est aux situations à décider des caractères," entails the determination (and opposition) of character by "*condition*":

³⁹ vii, 349 f.

⁴⁰ vii, 151.

"Ce ne sont plus, à proprement parler, les caractères qu'il faut mettre sur la scène, mais les conditions. Jusqu'à présent, dans la comédie, le caractère a été l'objet principal et la condition n'a été que l'accessoire. C'est du caractère qu'on tirait toute l'intrigue. On cherchait en général les circonstances qui le faisaient sortir, et l'on enchaînait ces circonstances. C'est la condition, ses devoirs, ses avantages, ses embarras, qui doivent servir de base à l'ouvrage. Il me semble que cette source est plus féconde, plus étendue et plus utile que le caractère" (vii, 150).

The French stage, Diderot goes on to say, has known financiers, judges, fathers, etc. But *the* financier as such, *the* judge, *the* father, etc. have been ignored and must now be introduced upon it. Instead of painting portraits of individuals, or even concentrating the most characteristic traits of a given species, say, those of several financiers, into the composite portrait or type of *Turcaret*, playwrights ought to construct *pièces à thèse*, sociological plays, in which "the duties of the various professions and social stations, their advantages, disadvantages and dangers would furnish the basis and moral." Moreover, if they should desire to make use of contrast, let them oppose character to "*condition*," even in the same person, or else one condition to another. This is why, in *le Shérif*, Diderot introduced a magistrate unworthy of his profession. But there may be only partial opposition. For instance, the hero of a drama may have the "character of his station"⁴ and be constrained by circumstances to become untrue to his professional ideals. Again, the opposition may be double. One may have a family besides a profession and the exigencies of these two "*conditions*" might clash tragically. We spoke of *l'avare, père de famille*. Better, from the dramatic point of view, is the *père-de famille avare*. Better still, a father who is "bon, vigilant, ferme et tendre," loving his son as a father should, yet impelled by his sense of duty (or by the prejudices attaching to his station) to encompass his son's ruin. Better dramatically than an unworthy judge is the one compelled by his pro-

⁴ vii, 324.

fessional code of honor to sacrifice himself or the person dearest to him.

"Que quelqu'un se propose de mettre sur la scène la condition du juge; qu'il intrigue son sujet d'une manière aussi intéressante qu'il le comporte et que je le conçois; que l'homme y soit forcé par les fonctions de son état, ou de manquer à la dignité et à la sainteté de son ministère, et de se déshonorer aux yeux des autres et aux siens, ou de s'immoler lui-même dans ses passions, ses goûts, sa fortune, sa naissance, sa femme et ses enfants, et l'on prononcera après, si l'on veut, que le drame honnête et sérieux est sans chaleur, sans couleur et sans force" (vii, 311f.)

As such a judge has been staged by Mercier, we shall quote his critic, M. Bédard, to show how a disciple of Diderot understood his master's theory:

Une injustice criante a été commise. A ses pires risques et périls, comme son ministère l'y oblige, le juge la répare. De ce préambule à cette conclusion, qu'est-ce qui constitue le drame? Non pas les perplexités du juge: il n'en a point; dès le premier instant, la cause est entendue. Non, mais les raisons qui rendent si douloureuses à son cœur la victoire indubitable de sa conscience. Réprimer l'excès d'un brutal, au mépris de sa vengeance, a beau être d'un grand courage, on n'y voit pas la matière d'un drame, pas plus que dans le fait d'affronter un chien enragé. Donner tort, parce qu'on le doit, à un homme qu'on aime est autrement dramatique. Il faut donc qu'on ait juste lieu de l'aimer, il faut donc que celui qui, dans la pièce, fait figure de méchant... ne soit pourtant point tout méchant. S'il n'est pas tout méchant, il faut puiser en son caractère les raisons de son injustice accidentelle; nous y gagnerons un portrait tout en nuances.... Il faut, en outre, emprunter aux circonstances du litige les apparences favorables dont le seigneur [*i. e.*, the judge's antagonist] colore à ses propres yeux sa prétention, par conséquent entrer au cœur de procès, c'est-à-dire employer la scène à cette tâche de restitution méticuleuse que Mercier lui veut assigner."⁴

Substitute Diderot's name for Mercier's and you have an excellent elucidation of part of the task of the "*genre sérieux et*

⁴ L. Bédard, *S. Mercier* (Paris, 1903), p. 260 f.

honnête." A part only, because the most tragic situation is the "*disconvenance sociale*"⁴⁸—the expression is Beaumarchais'—arising from the violent opposition between natural and humanitarian inclinations and the "miserable conventions" of society, as in Diderot's *Père de famille* and Sedaine's *Philosophe sans le savoir*. Diderot's theory of the drama is thus soldered to his sociology.

To sum up, and giving Diderot the benefit of a liberal interpretation, his "*condition*" is the medium to which character must adapt itself, and which stamps on it "*la verrue*" characteristic of social functions.⁴⁹ This is a consequence of his general philosophy of art. Diderot held that the dramatists who preceded him had been painting general man only, or reduced man, in the terms of Ariste's monologue, "*de l'état d'homme à celui d'homme bon ou méchant, tranquille ou colère.*"⁵⁰ The true artist, however, goes one step further and shows passion or character determined by function or occupation and determining itself in them, even as the organ is determined by biological function. There are thus three steps leading up to dramatic personalization, just as there are three classes of "*mots*" or "*cris*"—natural, professional, and characteristic.

The scope of our inquiry does not call for criticism of Diderot's theory or practice.⁵¹ Yet a word or two on this subject will not be amiss.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to suggest that Diderot's poetics of the drama is not as exclusive and heterodox as it is usually thought to be. Diderot's saying that "*c'est aux situations à décider des caractères*" does not contradict Mercier's statement that "*dans le drame l'action jaillit du jeu des caractères,*" any more than Beaumarchais' conception of interacting "situations" and "characters."⁵² Diderot did not

⁴⁸ Beaumarchais, Preface to *Figaro* (1781).

⁴⁹ Cf. Lanson, *Hommes et livres* (Paris, 1895), p. 326.

⁵⁰ vii, 394. Cf. *supra*, p. 40.

⁵¹ For a vindication of Diderot's originality as theoretician of the drama, V. Gaiffe, *op. cit.*, p. 121 ff., 344 f.; Cru, *Diderot*, p. 295 f.

⁵² *Contra*, Lintilhac, *Beaumarchais* (Paris, 1887), p. 310, note.

really imagine, as Palissot thought, that character could be separated from situation, much less look upon situations as the unique source of dramatic interest.⁴⁸ In fact, his contention that situation determines character was no doubt inspired by Aristotle's conception of the plot as the "groundwork, the design through the medium of which *ethos* derives its meaning and dramatic value," and of dramatic action as being "not with a view to the representation of character; character comes in as subsidiary to the actions... Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without characters."⁴⁹ This is interpreted by Professor Butcher to mean that "there may be a tragedy in which the moral character of the individual agents is so weakly portrayed as to be of no account in the evolution of the action. The persons may be mere types, or marked only by class characteristics, or lacking in those distinctive qualities out of which dramatic action grows."⁵⁰ If further authorities are wanted, Brunetière assures us, in defense of Diderot, that Corneille regularly subordinated character to situation.⁵¹

Again, is not too much made of the discrepancy between Diderot's theory and practice? He nowhere denied himself the right to compromise with his public. He said:

"J'aime qu'on étende la sphère de nos plaisirs, mais laissez-nous encore celles que nous avons" (vii, 151).

In our turn, let us pardon him for his experimenting with transitional plays. Diderot wrote and sketched several plays which were not dramas at all, and *le Père de famille* is avowedly "entre le genre sérieux du *Fils naturel* et la comédie."⁵² And besides, is it so certain, even on a rigorous interpretation of

⁴⁸ Palissot's argument is still repeated, among others, by Ducros, *Diderot* (Paris, 1894), p. 245 f., and J. Rocafort, *les Doctrines littér. de l'Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1890), p. 215. But cf. Gaiffe, *op. cit.*, p. 344, note, and Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, no. 86.

⁴⁹ Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetics*, 4th ed., (London, 1911), p. 346, 343.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 345; Cf. also D. Charlton, *Castelvetro's theory of poetry* (Manchester, 1913), p. 100.

⁵¹ Brunetière, *Les époques du théâtre français* (Paris, 1893), p. 278.

⁵² vii, 308.

the theory of the drama, that Diderot should have insisted on the *état civil* of the Commander in *le Père de famille*? He tells us that the Commander was a gentleman living on his *rentes* and that is all we need to know. And why should Saint-Albine tell us more about his trade since that was a sham devised to give him access to his Sophie? Even granting that a "*philosophe*" like Dorval could not live in idleness—though Diderot, too, will some day become a rentier and take long vacations—there is nothing to show that *le Fils naturel*, for all its being in the *genre sérieux*, was intended to be a full-fledged drama of profession.

A more serious objection made to Diderot is based on his own distinction of the comic *genre*, which portrays species, and the tragic, which deals with individuals. The hero of a tragedy, says Diderot, is always a particular figure; he is Regulus, Brutus, or Cato and he resembles one original only." The principal character of a comedy, on the contrary, stands for a great number of men.

"Si, par hasard, on lui donnait une physionomie si particulière, qu'il n'y eût dans la société qu'un seul individu qui lui ressemblât, la comédie retournerait à son enfance, et dégènerait en satire" (vii, 138).

Or, as the *Paradoxe sur le comédien* puts it:

"L'Avare et le Tartuffe ont été faits d'après tous les Toinards et tous les Grizels du monde; ce sont leurs traits les plus généraux et les plus marqués, et ce n'est le portrait exact d'aucun....

"La satire est d'un Tartuffe et la comédie est du Tartuffe. La satire poursuit un vicieux, la comédie poursuit un vice. S'il n'y avait qu'une ou deux Précieuses ridicules, on en aurait pu faire une satire, mais non pas une comédie" (viii, 389. Cf. also Mercier, *Du Théâtre*, p. 119).

It is these utterances which are turned against the dramatic system of Diderot by M. Gaiffe, the learned and sagacious historian of French drama in the eighteenth century:

²⁸ Cf. also Hurd, *Dissertation on the provinces of the drama*, ch. 1; Lessing, *Hamburgische dramaturgie*, nos. 92-93.

"S'il est étonnant [writes M. Gaiffe] que Diderot ait si incomplètement appliqué une théorie à laquelle il semblait bien attacher quelque importance, il n'est pas moins remarquable qu'il en ait,—inconsciemment, et par une de ces contradictions qui lui sont familières,—dénoncé le vice essentiel, en déclarant que 'le genre comique est des espèces, le genre tragique des individus.'"⁵⁴

If comedy is of the species, tragedy of the individual, M. Gaiffe further submits, the serious theatre, which is nearest to tragedy, must needs concern itself with exceptional types, not with entire social groups. It cannot do otherwise under the penalty of becoming "comical". But if the characters do not afford us a glimpse of comic in the "*pli professionnel*," they will remain cold and insipid. When the tragic tone or tragic situations are employed, the characters must be made either contemptible or heroic, that is to say, exceptional beings that might find a place in the unreal atmosphere of melodrama and tragedy, but are utterly out of place in bourgeois, every-day setting.

To the present writer, it seems that these strictures are too severe. It must be said for Diderot (proof of this has been previously submitted) that he sanctioned and recommended a touch of wit and humor in the serious drama.⁵⁵ So that if, as M. Gaiffe states, the best eighteenth-century dramas of "*conditions*" are those that have a comic tinge, Diderot gives evidence of sagacity. He did not intend to keep his characters strictly to the middle of the road between farce and heroic tragedy: "Dans le genre sérieux, les caractères seront souvent aussi généraux que dans le genre comique."⁵⁶ For example, we may imagine the hero of "domestic" tragedy to be a miser, exercising the profession of usurer. Yet he could add: "Mais ils seront toujours moins individuels que dans le genre tragique," because, even when moved to heroic deeds—and Diderot believed every class of people yielded men capable of heroism—the personages of the "drama" would still retain their class

⁵⁴ F. Gaiffe, *op. cit.*, p. 347. Cf. also the criticism of Diderot and Lessing in E. Grucker, *Lessing* (Paris, 1896), p. 413 ff.

⁵⁵ vii, 167, etc.

⁵⁶ vii, 140.

characteristics. Moreover, Diderot has provided for a more individualistic tragedy, namely, the "historical."⁸⁷ It is there that professional characteristics may be often absent without this conflicting with Diderot's theory.

It is none the less true that the balance is hard to strike between the comical and the tragic. Accordingly, we have the quasi-allegoric drama of Mercier, the *genre sombre* of Baculard d'Arnaud and de Bissy, the "*drame mixte*," of "intrigue and pathos," preconized by Beaumarchais.⁸⁸ Diderot himself felt impelled by his scientific and propagandist preoccupations to create average and general figures, applicable to all times and places, like those of his *Pères malheureux*.⁸⁹ He also moved away from the realistic *pièce* in the direction of melodramatic, biographic and anecdotal (or shall we say, Romanticist?) historical drama, thanks to his bent for hero-worship, his gross, pseudo-scientific notions of psychology, his liking for complicated intrigue, picturesqueness and the external apparatus of dramatic action. Witness his "*drame philosophique*,"⁹⁰ outlining the *Death of Socrates*, and the historical "tragedies" of the type of *le Shérif* and *Térentia*. Herein Diderot's theory of intermediary *genres* agrees with his dramatic practice which, if his lesser and unfinished plays are included, covers almost all kinds of dramatic compositions from comic imbroglio to quasi-tragedy. But whether the lability of his theory is a sign of weakness or of force is a question that is answered according to the point of view of him who asks it. It may be said for it that it is a manifestation of liberalism, Diderot having opposed no *genre* save the *genre ennuyeux* of heroic tragedy, and having strewn the *fermenta cognitionis* which, in addition to the melodrama and drama, gave birth to the modern social play and the photoplay. Who knows but

⁸⁷ Cf. the following chapter.

⁸⁸ Beaumarchais, Preface to *la Mère coupable* (1792), in *Œuv.*, ed. d'Heilly-Marescot, iv, 198.

⁸⁹ For symbolism as a characteristic of Romanticism, cf. M. B. Finch and E. A. Peers, *The origins of French Romanticism* (London, 1920), p. 33 f.

⁹⁰ vii, 314, 381 ff.

that we may yet witness the combination dreamed by Diderot, of pageantry, drama, pantomime and opera, aided by the resources of plastic and decorative arts?²

VI

THE "DRAMA" AS A GENRE VALID FOR ALL TIMES AND PLACES. HEROIC TRAGEDY, EXPRESSIVE OF ANCIENT SOCIETY, DIED WITH THE ANCIENTS. INADAPTATION OF NEO-CLASSIC TRAGEDY TO THE NEW "SPIRIT OF THE AGE."
THE REVOLUTION AND HISTORICAL DRAMA

We have hitherto considered the essence of "*drame*" and ascertained that the new *genre* was at once natural and artistic, that it reflected reality in all its objectivity and also gratified our esthetic sense, the natural "love of order" which constitutes "taste." Forcing a little Kant's terminology, we may claim for it *a priori* validity. Diderot believed that the "drama," and the "drama" alone, was able to stand the test of a-priority: *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod apud omnes*. Serious comedy and domestic tragedy had the privilege of appealing to the normal and invariant element which abides underneath the "revolutions"¹ of man and his institutions:

"Portez le nu en quelque lieu de la terre qu'il vous plaira; il fixera l'attention s'il est bien dessiné. Si vous excellez dans le genre sérieux, vous plairez à tous les temps et chez tous les peuples" (vii, 136).

"Je ne connais et je ne suis disposé à recevoir de loi... que de la vérité. Votre dessein serait-il de faire de l'action théâtrale une chose technique qui s'écarterait tantôt plus, tantôt moins de la nature, sans qu'il n'y eût aucun point fixe au delà ou en deçà duquel on pût l'accuser d'être faible, outrée, ou fausse ou vraie? Livrez-vous à des conventions nationales et ce qui sera bien à Paris sera mal à Londres, et ce qui est bien à Paris et à Londres aujourd'hui, y sera mal demain. Dans les mœurs et dans les arts il n'y a de bien et de mal pour moi que ce qui l'est en tout temps et partout.

² Cf. vii, 151; viii, 460 ff.

¹ Cf. xiv, 432 (art. "*Encyclopédie*").

Je veux que ma morale et mon goût soient éternels" (vii, 403, *Réponse à la lettre de Mme Riccoboni*, 1758).

From the *a priori* or "natural" character of the "drama," it follows that it must have subsisted virtually or potentially even before it was realized by the "dramaturgists" of Diderot's lifetime. The "*système de la nature*" subsists even when checked by unnatural forces and comes into manifest existence as soon as the conditions are removed which opposed its realization.

This reflexion leads us to consider Diderot's sociology of esthetic as well as his conception of the historical development of dramatic art. While the details of his views have been lost to us, his general outlook upon the history of the drama may be reconstructed owing to his having repeated over and over again in the course of his writings a number of sociological axioms which constitute the premises of his philosophy of dramatic history. The most important of these come up in connection with the subject of "rules," things Diderot seems to have grown more and more sceptical of as time went on:

"J'en demande pardon à Aristote, mais c'est une critique vicieuse que de déduire des règles exclusives des ouvrages les plus parfaits, comme si les moyens de plaire n'étaient pas infinis. Il n'y a presque aucune de ces règles que le génie ne puisse enfreindre avec succès... Les règles ont fait de l'art une routine; et je ne sais si elles n'ont pas été plus nuisibles qu'utiles. Entendous-nous: elles ont servi à l'homme ordinaire: elles ont nui à l'homme de génie" (xii, 75 f., *Pensées détachées sur la peinture, la sculpture, l'architecture et la poésie*, after 1776).

In most cases the "rules" are "un tissu de lois particulières dont on a fait des préceptes généraux," not a few of the accepted dramatic axioms being due to the misinterpretation of Horace and other authorities, as Grimm, who used to borrow Diderot's erudition, showed in the *Correspondance littéraire* of April 15, 1764.² Yet there is such a thing as an *a priori* poetics

² vii, 334 f.

³ *Corr. litt.*, v, 487 f.

and "un bon goût aussi vieux que le monde et la vertu."⁴

"Pour bien juger d'une production il ne faut pas la rapporter à une autre production... Qu'il y ait ou non des modèles subsistants, il n'importe. Il est une règle antérieure à tout et la raison poétique était, qu'il n'y avait point encore des poètes; sans cela comment aurait-on jugé le premier poème? Fut-il bon, parce qu'il plut? ou plut-il parce qu'il était bon?" (vii, 310, *De la poésie dramatique*).

"Il fallait un temps raisonneur, où l'on ne cherchât plus les règles dans les auteurs, mais dans la nature, et où l'on sentit le faux et le vrai de tant de poétiques arbitraires: je prends le terme de poétique dans son acception la plus générale, pour un système de règles données, selon lesquelles, en quelque genre que ce soit, on prétend qu'il faut travailler pour réussir" (xiv, 475, art. "*Encyclopédie*," 1755).

"Il y a bien de la différence entre enfanter à force de génie un ouvrage qui enlève les suffrages d'une nation qui a son moment, son goût, ses idées et ses préjugés et tracer la poétique du genre selon la connaissance réelle et réfléchie du cœur de l'homme, de la nature des choses et de la droite raison, qui sont les mêmes dans tous des temps. Le génie ne connaît point les règles, cependant il ne s'en écarte jamais dans ses succès. La philosophie ne connaît que les règles fondées dans la nature des êtres, qui est immuable et éternelle. C'est au siècle passé à former des exemples; c'est à notre siècle à prescrire les règles" (xiv, 425, art. "*Encyclopédie*").

Diderot agreed with the representatives of "l'esprit philosophique ou de doute"⁵—Perrault, La Motte, Terrasson, Boin-din, Fontenelle—that there is a "règle antérieure à tout" by which things of beauty may be judged objectively, because nature, reason, and taste obey invariable laws. He was neither a sectator of authority as such, a believer in mechanical devices for turning out poetry—their time had passed with the Renaissance—nor a subjectivist or unmitigated relativist, after the fashion of the "*pyrrhonistes*" whom the critics of his century loved to knock down and who were mostly invented for that

⁴ xii, 76 (*Pensées détachées*, etc.)

⁵ Cf. xiv, 425.

purpose.⁶ Like most of his contemporaries (and ours for that matter) Diderot was what M. Lalo would call a "dogmatic relativist."⁷

"Sur ces conventions théâtrales, voici ce que je pense. C'est que celui qui ignorera la raison poétique ignorant aussi le fondement de la règle, ne saura ni l'abandonner, ni la suivre à propos. Il aura pour elle trop de respect ou trop de mépris, deux écueils opposés mais également dangereux. L'un réduit à rien les observations et l'expérience des siècles passés, et ramène l'art à son enfance; l'autre l'arrête tout court où il est et l'empêche d'aller en avant" (vii, 89).

It is extremely difficult to keep one's critical balance nicely adjusted to the exigencies of every instance. Everywhere and at all times "prejudices, usages, manners, climates, governments, cults, events" leave their mark on large groups of men, so that we may speak of "national tastes" and national conventions" in addition to individual idiosyncrasies, all of which tend to obscure and frequently wholly obliterate the natural and normal promptings of reason and esthetic sentiment.⁸ Diderot did not condemn national art as such. He may have applied to art what he said of language: "Fontenelle parle bien, écrit bien, quoique son style fourmille d'idiotismes français."⁹ While apt to exaggerate these national differences (he says for instance there are involved in playing Shakespeare and Racine no common principles),¹⁰ Diderot was unalterably opposed to literary intolerance, to the idea, so dear to pseudo-Classicists and "geometers," that the genius and taste of one's own generation are the measure whereby all artistic and literary productions are to be gauged. There is, says Diderot, "in matters of taste as in religious affairs, a sort of intolerance which I

⁶ *Contra*, D. Mornet in *Rev. d'hist. Litt.* xxi (1914), p. 258. Buffier is the exception which confirms the rule.

⁷ Cf. Lalo, *Introduction à l'esthétique* (Paris, 1912).

⁸ Cf. x, 38 (Art. "Beau," 1751); i, 404 f. (Additions to the *Lettre sur les sourds*, 1751). For similar opinions of his contemporaries, cf. the paper of D. Mornet on "la Question des règles au xviii^e siècle" in *Rev. d'hist. Litt.* xxi (1914). For Grimm and Geoffroy, v. Des Granges, *Geoffroy et la critique dramatique*, p. 146.

⁹ v, 419 f. (*Neveu de Ramcau*).

¹⁰ viii, 344, 364 (*Paradoxe sur le comédien*).

blame, but of which I am able to free myself only by a special effort of my reason."¹¹ This intolerant spirit is at the root of pseudo-Classicist worship of French genius, which Brumoy had condemned in advance in these words: "C'est comme si l'on jugeait un étranger sur le code français."¹²

While Rousseau¹³ thought that men of genius were unable to stamp their ideas on society, Diderot optimistically believed in their final success, though not necessarily or even usually in their life time. There is progress in art because artistic originality—"génie" or "verve"—is not entirely dependent on the factors determining the average "taste," which is also usually reflected by critics.¹⁴ In spite of all difficulties genius succeeds in enriching public taste and slowly directs it toward the asymptote of "good taste," that "of all times, of all countries, of all ages, and of all estates."¹⁵ Yet progress is not rectilinear. If taste panders to social prejudices and suffers the influence of climatic and national prejudices, "la verve," on the contrary, may be too precipitate, too sensitive to "*rapports*" that lie beyond the ken of average man, in one word, too subjective. Genius may also promote a taste which is not entirely "good." (Shakespeare, the monstrous, and even Racine are shining examples of this.) This is why Diderot was at times reconciled to a century which failed to produce a dramatic genius:

"Mais ce siècle s'est fait attendre si longtemps, que j'ai pensé quelquefois qu'il serait heureux pour un peuple qu'il ne se rencontrât point chez lui un homme extraordinaire, sous lequel un art naissant fit ses premiers progrès trop grands et trop rapides, et qui en interrompit le mouvement naturel. Les ouvrages de cet homme seront nécessairement des composés monstrueux, parce que le génie et le bon goût sont deux qualités très différentes. La nature donne l'un en un moment, l'autre est le produit des siècles. Ces monstres deviendront des modèles nationaux; ils décideront le goût d'un peuple.

¹¹ v, 216 (*Eloge de Richardson*, 1761).

¹² Brumoy, *Le Théâtre des Grecs*, ed. of 1763, vol. i, p. 118.

¹³ *Discours sur l'origine... de l'inégalité*, 1754.

¹⁴ vii, 307; viii, 440 f. (*Projet de préface*); iv, 30 (*Sur l'évidence*).

¹⁵ v, 233 (*Réflexions sur Térence*, 1762). Cf. xi, 150 (*Salon de 1767*); xii, 76 (*Pensées détachées*); xviii, 158 (*To Falconet*, Sept. 1766).

Les bons esprits qui succéderont trouveront en leur faveur une prévention qu'ils n'oseront heurter; et la notion du beau s'obscurcira, comme il arriverait à celle du bien de s'obscurcir chez des barbares qui auraient pris une vénération excessive pour quelque chef d'un caractère équivoque, qui se serait rendu recommandable par des services importants et des vices heureux. Dans le moral, il n'y a que Dieu qui doive servir de modèle à l'homme; dans les arts, que la nature. Si les sciences et les arts s'avancent par des degrés insensibles, un homme ne différera pas assez d'un autre pour lui en imposer, fonder un genre adopté, et donner un goût à la nation; conséquemment la nature et la raison conserveront leurs droits" (xiv, 475, art. "*Encyclopédie*").

Such partly monstrous innovations, when sanctioned by a nation, may create a "dramatic system," which contrives to maintain itself by virtue of a few natural traits ("grands traits de Nature") until a philosophic poet "quarters the hippogriff" and introduces better taste." For nothing is rarer than a genius who should have learned the "lesson of taste and the centuries in all their purity," and attained to the ideal in one leap, as it were. Even should one appear, he would prove beyond his time:

"Il n'y a qu'un moment heureux; c'est celui où il y a assez de verve et de liberté pour être chaud, assez de jugement et de goût pour être sage" (xi, 132).

Until such minds and moments meet, the most enlightened critics will strive to point out the flaws of the various "systems" and suggest improvements." The philosophic critic is essentially progressive; he does not swear by one "system" nor even by all, for he knows that there "are idiotisms that are common to all times and countries just as there are common stupidities."¹⁶ Yet he tries to anticipate the direction of progress and the trend of evolution. Unable himself to form poets—for poetry cannot be taught by precept—the critic possessed of "*esprit philosophique*" will foresee or recognize the man of

¹⁶ xi, 153, 254 (*Salon de 1767*). V. the next chapter.

¹⁷ Cf. xiv, 475.

¹⁸ v, 420 (*le Neveu de Rameau*).

genius and prepare public taste for his reception." When nature produces an artist to whose work traditional names and laws no longer apply, the philosophic critic will "pull down all the boundaries that were not set by reason, give to the arts and sciences the liberty that is so precious to them, and say to the admirers of antiquity: 'Call the *London Merchant* what you will, provided you agree that the play shines with sublime beauties.'"²⁰

We are now prepared to understand Diderot's attitude in the three-cornered battle fought by the "Ancients" (the *antiquisants* of the race of Guimond de la Touche), the "Moderns" (i. e., the partisans of the heroic tragedy of Crébillon and Voltaire), and the harbingers of the new order of things dramatic. Diderot was not the man whom one might ask, as Huet asked Perrault, whether he meant to judge all things by the standards of his century. Said he, applying to this question the principles we have been considering:

"Pour bien juger d'une production il ne faut pas la rapporter à une autre production. Ce fut ainsi qu'un de nos premiers critiques se trompa. Il dit: 'Les anciens n'ont point eu d'opéra, donc l'opéra est un mauvais genre.' Plus circonspect, ou plus instruit, il n'eût fait ni l'un ni l'autre raisonnement. Qu'il y ait ou non des modèles subsistants, il n'importe. Il est une règle antérieure à tout..." (vii, 310).

Accordingly, it is in the name of things-in-themselves that Diderot found fault with the acting of the ancients as well as that of his contemporaries. He thus answered Mme Riccoboni's remark that the Greek mimes would now appear ridiculous:

"*Leur jeu serait bien ridicule à nos yeux.*" Et le notre aux leurs: pourquoi cela? C'est qu'il n'y a que le vrai qui soit de tous les temps et de tous les lieux" (vii, 403).

Reasoning analogously, Diderot held that the Greek dramatic "system" may have been the truest known, but it was

²⁰ Cf. an article by Grimm, but with all the marks of Diderot's thought and style in the *Corr. Litt.*, Sept. 1, 1763.

²¹ xiv, 475 (*"Encyclopédie"*).

not necessarily the last word of truth nor true in all its parts. Diderot reminded the apostles of the *retour à l'antique*, who were beginning to appear as he published his manifestos, that art was essentially progressive and that dramatic art in particular had outgrown its "childhood," the time when comedy was satire, and sock, buskin and mask graced the stage."

In one respect, however, the ancient theatre was, if not absolutely "true," at least as nearly so as the best the Moderns had produced. There is every reason to believe that Diderot held that the "*serious genre*" was heir to ancient tradition.²¹ To be sure, although he did not compare at any length the *genre* exemplified by classical and Gallo-classical dramatists, he says that the "nature" imitated in ancient serious comedy was coarser and more energetic than the modern. And he may have been earnestly convinced that Terence had no rival among the moderns. On the other hand, he was certain that a modern writer like Sedaine, who struck deep enough to reach the uncorrupted layer in human nature would have pleased the "virtuous people" of all ages, the contemporaries of Terence as well as Diderot's own. Bret was quite inferior in talent to the author of *Andria*. Nevertheless,

"lorsque j'entendis les scènes du Paysan dans *le Faux généreux*, je dis: Voilà qui plaira à toute la terre, et dans tous les temps; voilà qui fera fondre en larmes. L'effet a confirmé mon jugement. Cet épisode est tout à fait dans le genre honnête et sérieux" (vii, 310 f.)

This is meager enough, but there is no reason to suppose that Diderot looked upon the old "drama" and the new otherwise than as two manifestations of the same thing. It is more difficult to establish the relationship of philosophic *tragedy* to the tragedy of the ancients. Granting the esthetic justification of Greek tragedy, we may ask, Was not the *genre* of Crébillon and Voltaire much nearer to it than the innovation of Diderot?

²¹ vii, 121, 123, 124. Cf. viii, 405.

²² Cf. vii, 311 and Grimm in *Corr. Litt.*, vii, 413 (Sept. 15, 1767). On Terence considered as the father of "*drame*," v. E. Bernbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility* (Boston, 1915), ch. 2: "Sentimental misinterpretations of Plautus and Terence."

Was ancient tragedy sufficiently "true" to deserve a successor? And is the "*bourgeoise*" the only tragedy possible in the "*système de la nature*"?

These questions Diderot has not answered for us in as many words. We shall try, however, to collect some of his sayings which may suggest the proper answers. The *Entretiens* and *De la Poésie dramatique* are very reticent about the nature of ancient tragedy and the shortcomings of French heroic tragedy and we shall have to wait for the *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (1770-1778) for a formal declaration of war on the aristocratic tragic *genre* and a plea for a new, "historical" tragedy.²³ Yet there are certain indications, even outside of and before the *Paradox*, which show that Diderot always believed that his own tragic theatre was perfectly apposite to the artistic needs of the new world, and withal the sole legitimate heir to ancient tragedy in those things which are of all times and places.

This right of succession may seem preposterous in view of the fact that an impassible gulf separates the *mores* pictured in ancient tragedy and the more polished manners and customs of the French in the Age of Taste and Reason. To a "Modern" like Terrasson the manners of the ancients were an abomination. Even the French Classicists and pseudo-Classicists who admired the ancients did so, as M. Louis Bertrand has justly observed, for their having been "*honnêtes gens*," and united good breeding with elegance and harmony.²⁴ Even Fénelon saw between the pages of Homer and Virgil his own Utopias of a Golden Age. Brumoy taught that "*l'art doit peindre la nature telle qu'il la trouve. Je veux dire avec les appanages de l'humanité et de l'éducation.*"²⁵ Not so Diderot, who preferred Homer (the *fons et origo* of tragic *mores* and ideas) to Virgil and Horace and took delight in the old bard, as he later did in Ossian, because he caught in them a glimpse of "*quelque chose d'énorme, de barbare et de sauvage.*"²⁶ Wrote Diderot:

²³ V. the subsequent chapter.

²⁴ L. Bertrand, *La fin du classicisme et le retour à l'antique*, (Paris, 1897), p. 96.

²⁵ Brumoy, *op. cit.* I, p. 12.

²⁶ vii, 371.

"La nature m'a donné le goût de la simplicité; et je tâche de le perfectionner par la lecture des Anciens. Voilà mon secret. Celui qui lirait Homère... y découvrirait bien plus sûrement la source ou je puise... Point d'esprit, mais des choses d'une vérité si grande qu'on se persuaderait presque qu'on les aurait trouvées comme Homère" (vii, 339; cf. iii, 481).

"Plusieurs années de suite j'ai été aussi religieux à lire un chant d'Homère avant de me coucher que l'est un bon prêtre à réciter son bréviaire. J'ai sucé de bonne heure le lait d'Homère, de Virgile, d'Horace, de Térence, d'Anacréon, de Platon, d'Euripide, coupé avec celui de Moïse et des prophètes" (iii, 478).

These lines might have been written by Fénelon, instead of Diderot. But neither Fénelon nor Vico would have extolled barbaric and orgiastic *mores*, as Diderot does in *De la Poésie dramatique*:

"Quand est-ce que la nature prépare des modèles à l'art? C'est au temps où les enfants s'arrachent les cheveux autour du lit d'un père moribond, où une mère découvre son sein et conjure son fils par les mamelles qui l'ont allaité, où un ami se coupe la chevelure, et la répand sur le cadavre de son ami; où c'est lui qui le soutient par la tête et qui le porte sur un bûcher, qui recueille sa cendre et qui la renferme dans une urne qu'il va, lui, certains jours, arroser de ses pleurs; où les repas sont des sacrifices qui commencent et finissent par des coupes remplies de vin, et versées sur la terre; où le peuple parle à ses maîtres; et où ses maîtres l'entendent et lui répondent; ...où des pythies écumantes par la présence d'un démon qui les tourmente, sont assises sur des trépieds, ont les yeux égarés, et font mugir de leurs cris prophétiques le fond obscur des antres; où les dieux, altérés du sang humain, ne sont apaisés que par son effusion; où des bacchantes, armées de thyrses, s'égarant dans les forêts et inspirent l'effroi au profane qui se rencontre sur leur passage; où d'autres femmes se dépouillent sans pudeur, ouvrent les bras au premier qui se présente, et se prostituent, etc. Qu'est-ce qu'il faut au poète? Est-ce une nature brute ou cultivée, paisible ou troublée? ...La poésie veut quelque chose d'énorme, de barbare et de sauvage" (vii, 370 f.)

This view of the relationship of ancient "poetry" and ancient society is completed by what a certain "*Philosophe*," who being credited with the interpretations of Horace already alluded to, is none other than Diderot, has to say in the *Correspondance littéraire* of April 15, 1764. The Philosopher defends Homer against Marmontel²⁷ who found fault with the Greek poet because of Achilles' saying "Dear Patroclus, be not angry with me if the news is brought to you in Hades that I surrendered Hector's body to his father: for..." (not "I could not resist the tears of his unfortunate father," but)... "he brought me a ransom worthy of thee."

"Ne voyez vous pas [asks our 'Philosopher'] qu'en faisant dire à Achille: 'car je n'ai pu résister aux larmes de ce vieillard,' vous lui faites dire une chose commune et triviale, et que ce qui donne de la couleur au discours d'Achille, c'est ce qu'Homère lui fait dire: 'car il m'apporte une rançon digne de moi'? Pourquoi voulez-vous qu'Achille se laisse fléchir par les larmes d'un ennemi dont la querelle a entraîné la perte de ce Patrocle si tendrement aimé, si douloureusement regretté? Mais il n'a rien à opposer à la rançon, et il se soumet aux lois de l'usage..."

"Ce sont les préjugés et les mœurs qui en résultent qui rendent un poème précieux aux yeux d'un homme de goût. Si vous ne savez peindre qu'avec ces traits généraux qui conviennent aux hommes de tous les climats, de toutes les nations, de tous les âges, vous n'attacherez, ni ne toucherez jamais durablement."²⁸ Pourquoi Priam est-il si pathétique? Ce n'est pas parce que c'est un père qui pleure la mort de son fils, sans quoi le maréchal de Belle-Isle recevant la nouvelle de la mort du comte de Gisors, serait aussi touchant que Priam. Ce qui rend celui-ci pathétique, c'est le soin qu'il met à remplir un devoir réputé sacré, celui de donner la sépulture à son fils. Ce devoir si saint est fondé sur un préjugé que vous et moi ne respectons guère: car qu'importe qu'un cadavre soit mangé par les oiseaux de proie ou par les vers de terre? Pourquoi donc sommes-nous si attendris par la prière de Priam? C'est qu'il n'y a que les préjugés de touchant en poésie; c'est que celui-ci suppose des mœurs

²⁷ Marmontel, *Poétique française*, (1763), vol. II, p. 294 ff.

²⁸ (Not italicized in the original.)

simples et bien pures, qu'il est fondé sur une ~~innocence~~ de vertus et de qualités honnêtes et sociales; et lorsqu'il met un vieillard, vénérable par son âge et par son rang, dans la nécessité de tomber aux pieds du vainqueur et du meurtrier de son fils, il produit un tableau qui déchire" (*Corr. litt.*, v. 484 f.)

There is probably more in these ideas than appears in Grimm's transcription. To explain the paradoxical contrast between Diderot's benevolence toward the Greeks' prejudices and his hatred of those of his own age, we may rightly assume that he regarded the former as beneficial to society and the latter as detrimental to the common weal. But the possibility is not excluded that Diderot, whom Grimm did not fully understand on this point, was also endeavoring to establish a parallel between the tragic situations and the heroes of Homer and those of the modern drama-tragedy, in order to assert the identity of the ancient and philosophic tragic *genres*. Achilles and the Father of the Family are alike heroic, in that they are obliged to stifle their natural feelings out of deference to prejudice.] For "heroes, romantic lovers, great patriots, apostles of religion, philosophers *à toute outrance*, all these rare and divine madmen make poetry in life."²⁰ Whence we may infer that the heroes of *bourgeoise* and historical drama and tragedy are none the less heroic and poetical for their being modern. The legitimacy of the ancestry of the new theatre thus established, its a-priority would follow as a matter of course.

Whether this *rapprochement* between ancient and Diderotian drama is well-founded or not, it is certain that, "poetic" because of the "nature" which was its theme, Greek drama was no less so for its lyricism, for its expression in which a harmony reminiscent of natural accent accompanied a marvellously plastic language only recently separated from the "*langage d'action*"²¹ If the parallelism of ancient and philosophic drama is to subsist, we must admit that, as already intimated, Diderot did not intend to proscribe "poetic" manners of expression.

Dacier tells us that Greek dramatic poetry "was first the daughter of religion, that it then abandoned itself to dissolution

²⁰ xi, 125 (*Salon de 1767*).

²¹ Cf. iii, 481.

and debauchery and finally submitted to the rules of art which came to the rescue of nature, putting an end to its misconduct."²¹ Diderot, on the contrary, seems to have felt that from the time of its conception "in the wedlock of national superstition and poetry"²² to that of its perfection by tragedians who were also philosophers and statesmen, the growth of Greek tragedy was entirely unimpeded and natural, a product of freedom and *verve* perfectly apposite to the *mores* and ideas of the Greeks. It could not have been otherwise in an harmonious society in which art sprung from life and returned to it. He never tired of recommending the study of the old tragedians as the best companions in the direct observation of nature:

"Je ne me laisserai point de crier à nos Français: 'La Vérité! La Nature! les Anciens! Sophocle! Philoctète'"
(vii, 120).

Diderot especially admired the ancients' ability to conjure up life in all its energy and fecundity with the simplest means²³—a simple dramatic action taken up toward the end in order that tension be at maximum, and drawn easily and inexorably to its preordained conclusion; a catastrophe ever imminent and always held back by a simple and true circumstance, a few characters firmly drawn; energetic passions and discourses, direct presentation of action, and beautiful *tableaux*; no elaborate decorations, no conventional analyses, intrigues, or *coups de théâtre*. In these respects he hoped that "*le drame*" might equal ancient tragedy.

Was ancient tragedy superior in technique to that perfected by Racine or Corneille? As already stated, Diderot is reticent about the shortcomings of modern tragedy in the *Entretiens* and *De la Poésie dramatique*.²⁴ Yet even before his definitive condemnation of heroic tragedy in the *Paradoxe sur le comé-*

²¹ Dacler, *La poétique d'Aristote* (Paris, 1692), pref. p. iv.

²² vii, 155.

²³ vii, 316, 121.

²⁴ The *Additions* to the *Lettre sur les Sourds* (I, 428) would divide honors equally, but Diderot is there trying to prejudice us against the Trévoux journalist.

dien, the Sultana of the *Bijoux indiscrets* leaves little room for doubt as to its inferiority:

"Sélim, répondit la sultane, Ricaric vous... dira pour quoi nos tragédies sont inférieures à celles des Anciens; pour moi, je me chargerai volontiers de vous montrer que cela est... Mettez à part certaines idées relatives à leurs usages, à leurs mœurs, et à leur religion, et qui ne vous choquent que parce que les conjonctures ont changé; et convenez que leurs sujets sont nobles, bien choisis, intéressants, que l'action se développe comme d'elle même; que les dénouements n'y sont pas forcés, que l'intérêt n'y est point partagé, ni l'action surchargée par des épisodes. Transportez-vous en idée dans l'île d'Alindala;... approchez-vous de la caverne du malheureux Polipsile [*i. e.*, Sophocles' Philoctetes]; ne perdez pas un mot de ses plaintes, et dites-moi si rien vous tire de l'illusion. Citez-moi une pièce moderne qui puisse supporter le même examen et prétendre au même degré de perfection, et je me tiens pour vaincue" (iv, 284, cf. iii, 481 f., viii, 405 f.).

One would look in vain in the writings of Diderot for an historical *exposé* of the way in which drama and tragedy reflected the successive mental and social revolutions. Bishop Hurd saw in the theatre of American Indians something approaching the *genre larmoyant*, and Diderot who, in the *Bijoux indiscrets*, had a savage sit in judgment on French tragedy, might have been also expected to notice the theatre of primitive peoples. He does nothing of the sort, nor does he discuss the "system" of Shakespeare and its relation to that of the ancients.²⁵ Living in a "Gothic" age, Shakespeare should have vied with Homer in Diderot's esteem: there are enough butcheries in Shakespeare to stamp him as "poetic." Diderot's enthusiasm for Shakespeare was dampened, however, by the realization that the English poet was wanting in taste and measure; he lacked the noble simplicity of Homer.²⁶ This is very faint praise, indeed.

²⁵ On Shakespeare in France, v. Baldensperger, *Etudes d'histoire littéraire*, 2e série (Paris, 1910).

²⁶ Cf. vii, 137, 374; ii, 331 (*Réfutation d'Helvétius*); xv, 37 (Art. "Génie"); xix, 465 (To Voltaire, Sept. 29, 1762).

"Le sublime et le génie brillent dans Shakespeare comme des éclairs dans une longue nuit."

"Convenez que c'est un homme bien extraordinaire que Shakespeare. Il n'y a pas une de ces scènes dont *avec un peu de talent* on ne fît une grande chose... Et puis quelle rapidité et quel nombre!"

This much is certain, that Diderot regarded Gallo-classic tragedy as ancient tragedy distorted and ill adapted in "matter" and technique to the exigencies of the new age. He specifically mentions two changes introduced by the variation in religious beliefs. The "wickedness of men" had replaced in modern tragedy the "Destiny" of the ancients.²⁷ Again, the moderns paid more attention to characterization than the ancients, whose religion hypostatized virtues and vices, with the consequence that the poet could not draw well defined characters. For had he done so he would have duplicated the work of mythology—"Il eût doublé des êtres; il aurait montré la même passion sous la forme d'un dieu et sous celle d'un homme."²⁸ (The psychological superiority of Christian writers was asserted later with different motivations by Chateaubriand and Hugo.) But to offset these improvements, if we may so call them, a thing Diderot seems reluctant to admit,—

"nous n'avons rien épargné pour corrompre le genre dramatique. Nous avons conservé des anciens l'emphase de la versification qui convenait tant à des langues à quantité forte et à accent marqué, à des théâtres spacieux, à une déclamation notée et accompagnée d'instruments; et nous avons abandonné la simplicité de l'intrigue et du dialogue, et la vérité des tableaux" (vii, 121).

The hybrid tragic "system" then prevailing was something half-true and half-false, that is to say, the worst thing imaginable. Further down we shall note that Diderot somehow connected the loss of the sense of artistic fitness with the advent of theocracy and the system of privileges. Yet he was

²⁷ For a defence of the Greek conception of fate from the attack of Beaumarchais, v. *Corr. Litt.*, vii, 414.

²⁸ vii, 155.

generous enough to recognize the share which the "philosophic spirit" had in the decadence of art. We say generous, because it is to be supposed that Diderot realized that the "drama" was as much endangered by the philosophic spirit as heroic tragedy. The disappearance of superstition, of feudal and barbarous customs, of prejudices of all sorts, deprived art of its most picturesque material. Diderot believed, with Vico and the adversaries of the "*philosophes*," that under scientific discipline the imagination was tamed and poetry vanished. In *De la Poésie dramatique* Diderot had praised the good old times for their poetic color. The crimes of Christianity, he was always glad to point out, made excellent dramatic material. Unfortunately, the Age of Reason, by enthroning the "philosophical spirit," dried up the sources of poetic inspiration:

"Partout décadence de la verve et de la poésie, à mesure que l'esprit philosophique a fait des progrès; on cesse de cultiver ce qu'on méprise. Platon chasse les poètes de sa cité. L'esprit philosophique veut des comparaisons plus resserrées, plus strictes, plus rigoureuses; sa marche circonspecte est ennemie du mouvement et des figures. Le règne des images passe à mesure que celui des choses s'étend. Il s'introduit par la raison une exactitude, une précision, une méthode, pardonnez-moi le mot, une sorte de pédanterie qui tue tout. Tous les préjugés civils et religieux se dissipent; et il est incroyable combien l'incrédulité ôte de ressources à la poésie. Les mœurs se policent; les usages barbares, poétiques et pittoresques cessent; et il est incroyable le mal que cette monotone politesse porte à la poésie. L'esprit philosophique amène le style sententieux et sec. Les expressions abstraites qui renferment un grand nombre de phénomènes se multiplient et prennent la place des expressions figurées...." (xi, 131 f., *Salon de 1767*).

In criticizing the "philosophic spirit" Diderot aimed at something more general than the state of mind of the Encyclopedists. He had in mind all the exponents of rationalism, including the *grands classiques*. If we are right in identifying him with the "Philosopher" of the *Correspondance littéraire* of 1764, we recognize Diderot's predilection for the biographic sort of tragedy when that "philosopher" informs us that French

tragic authors have been wrong in constantly endeavoring to draw general man, the man *of*, instead of *for*, all ages and countries.

"Le philosophe... Pourquoi ôter à une pierre précieuse ce qui la distingue et lui donne son caractère? Je ne sais si c'est la faute de la poésie ou du génie des Français; mais, dans nos poèmes, la monotonie des mœurs me paraît encore plus grande que celle des vers. Convenez que dans Racine et Voltaire, Achille et Henri III, Orosmane et le duc de Foix, Burrhus et Lisois, sont le même personnage sous une dénomination et dans une situation différentes.

Le poète. — Vous croyez donc que tous nos poètes n'ont qu'un seul et même patron sur lequel ils découpent tous leurs personnages?

Le philosophe. — Précisément. Ils ont des traits généraux pour peindre un jeune héros bouillant et superbe, plein de feu et de générosité; ils en ont pour peindre un vieillard, un tyran, une mère tendre, une amante passionnée; mais dans tout cela, rien de national, rien qui rappelle les mœurs et le siècle, rien qui justifie le nom du personnage et qui lui donne de la physionomie et de la vérité."³

The tragic heroes of the moderns thus tend to become schematic figures, mere "*caricatures en beau*."⁴ No doubt Diderot must have swelled the chorus of those who saw in love and gallantry essentials of traditional French tragedy; but he did so in order to blame the practice and to point out that realistic "drama" and tragedy were above reproach.

But the main source of theatrical evil—an evil from which the new "drama" was exempt—was the translation of social (or, rather, unsocial) prejudices into esthetic norms. This is a natural consequence of the identification of taste and *mores*.

"Si le système moral est corrompu, il faut que le goût soit faux. La vérité et la vertu sont les amies des beaux arts."⁵

³ *Corr. litt.*, v, 485 f. This may be in part a rejoinder to contemporary criticism by non-French authors, of "French taste."

⁴ Cf. vii, 368. We have seen that according to Diderot tragedy is less "general" than comedy.

⁵ vii, 318. Cf. also Rousseau, *Emile*, Bk. iv; *Lettre à d'Alembert*.

All his life Diderot was most insistent on the inseparability of beauty from truth and goodness.

"Pour juger ici de quel côté est le bon goût il faut bien déterminer de quel côté sont les bonnes mœurs... Son goût se réduit à ceci; j'aime le vice; et le mien à ceci; j'aime la vertu. Il en est ainsi de presque tous les jugements" (xix, 120).

"Une belle âme ne va guère avec un goût faux; peut-on avoir du goût quand on a le cœur corrompu?" (xii, 75).

Instead of tracing with Rousseau the origin of art to taste for laziness and ostentation,⁴² Diderot held with the English writers that both taste and moral sensibility were identical in their origin. The instinct of artistic imitation and that of sociality are correlated. Luxury and the spirit of material gain, the great corruptors of morals, are also the plague of letters. Owing to their influence social coherence is loosened and certain classes gain ascendancy. Under such circumstances, "par une vénération ridicule pour certaines conditions, bientôt ce sont les seules dont on peigne les mœurs." The middle class is then vowed to comedy as if there were something inherently comical about those vocations which it is safe to attack. (We see here *sur le vif* how Diderot's political aims squared with his theory.) Presently, the "goût que l'on tient de l'éducation et de l'habitude du grand monde" is substituted to "celui qui naît du sentiment de l'honnête." No poetics is then possible because there is no unity of esthetic principles.⁴³ The much vaunted "good" taste of French society, in particular, changed with fashion or bowed to arbitrary "*bienséances*."

"Nous dirions, d'une femme qui ressemblerait à quelque-une de ces statues qui enchantent nos regards aux Tuileries, qu'elle a la tête jolie, mais le pied gros, la jambe forte et point de taille. La femme qui est belle pour le sculpteur sur un sofa, est laide dans son atelier. Nous sommes pleins de ces contradictions" (vii, 373).

⁴² Rousseau, *Discours sur les arts* (1750).

⁴³ x, 118; vii, 372. Cf. also *Emile*, bk. iv.

Under such circumstances art takes to "mannerism" or Academicism. "La manière est dans les beaux-arts ce que l'hypocrisie est dans les mœurs." "Pseudo-Classic idealism, the cult of *bel-esprit*, we may add, is a companion to moral hypocrisy."

"Quelle sera donc la ressource d'un poète, chez un peuple dont les mœurs sont faibles, petites et maniérées; où l'imitation rigoureuse des conversations ne formerait qu'un tissu d'expressions fausses, insensées et basses; où il n'y a plus ni franchise, ni bonhomie; où un père appelle son fils monsieur, et où une mère appelle sa fille mademoiselle; où les cérémonies publiques n'ont rien d'auguste; la conduite domestique, rien de touchant et d'honnête; les actes solennels, rien de vrai? Il tâchera de les embellir; il choisira les circonstances qui prêtent le plus à son art; il négligera les autres, et il osera en supposer quelques-unes.

"Mais quelle finesse de goût ne lui faudra-t-il pas, pour sentir jusqu'où les mœurs publiques et particulières peuvent être embellies? S'il passe la mesure, il sera faux et romanesque..." (vii, 372).

Was Diderot's age really a "*siècle du goût*" and not a "*siècle du génie*"? A serious matter that, for once a people is afraid of artistic innovations, once it sets arbitrary limits to the effects of art and upholds false standards of "taste," it might persist in its course for centuries. In such centuries genius slumbers and the voice of nature is not heeded. Dorval was fully aware of the gravity of such a situation:

"Dorval.—Ah! bienséances cruelles, que vous rendez les ouvrages décents et petits!... Mais, ajouta Dorval d'un sang-froid qui me surprit. Ce que je propose ne se peut donc plus?

Moi.—Je ne crois pas que nous en venions jamais là.

Dorval.—Eh bien, tout est perdu! Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, Crébillon, ont reçu les plus grands applaudissements auxquels des hommes de génie pouvaient prétendre; et la tragédie est arrivée parmi nous au plus haut degré de perfection" (vii, 118).

"xli, 121.

"Cf. xi, 112.

Voltaire, who about the year 1758 seemed to be the only man talented enough to secure a hearing for the new *genres*, incensed the false gods of tradition." Happily, Diderot never quite lost faith in the coming of a literary Messiah. As Dorval had said:

"Il y a cependant une ressource: il faut espérer que quelque jour un homme de génie sentira l'impossibilité d'atteindre ceux qui l'ont précédé dans une route battue, et se jettera de dépit dans une autre: c'est le seul événement qui puisse nous affranchir de plusieurs préjugés que la philosophie a vainement attaqués. Ce ne sont plus des raisons, c'est une production qu'il nous faut" (vii, 119; cf. 157, 313).

In literature as in politics, the Jacobin expects the good to come out of an excess of evil. Just as Diderot hoped a genius would take to the new tragic *genre* "out of spite" after failing in the old, he expected the old Bastille of rules and conventions to be stormed by the public "au bout du siècle," "lorsque l'ennui porté à son comble a enfreint ces bornes étroites et qu'il est devenu l'unique germe de quelques productions nouvelles et la source d'un plaisir."

"On fait des tragédies bourgeoises. Que font alors toutes les têtes moutonnières, tous ces demi-penseurs qui ne remontent à l'essence de rien? Ils ramassent autorité sur autorité pour décrier le genre nouveau; le peuple les croit; ce sont ses vrais législateurs... Les premiers efforts sont découragés; l'homme de génie s'arrête au premier pas. Une nation plus libre, plus affranchie de préjugés recueille la lumière que l'on porte à s'éteindre ou en tire parti; ou le peuple, las de s'ennuyer à des redites perpétuelles, forcé par ce vieux style dont il ne saurait se départir, se prête plus par son intérêt de plaisir que par sa raison à un nouveau genre...." (viii, 441, *Projet de préface*, 1762).

In the next chapter we shall see how Diderot's expectations varied with the success of his dramatic experiments. At the time of the *Entretiens* and *De la Poésie dramatique* he was perforce content to praise a few "dramas" and domestic tragedies

* Cf. vii, 120.

and to note with delight the spread of philosophic ideas which indicated that the "spirit of the century" was becoming active:

"Je crois qu'en un ouvrage, quelqu'il soit, l'esprit du siècle doit se remarquer. Si la morale s'épure, si le préjugé s'affaiblit, si les esprits ont une pente à la bienfaisance générale, si le goût des choses utiles s'est répandu, si le peuple s'intéresse aux opérations du ministre, il faut qu'on s'en aperçoive, même dans une comédie..." (vii, 128, *Deuxième entretien*).

"Mais les temps de barbarie sont passés; le siècle s'est éclairé; la raison s'est épurée; ses préceptes remplissent les ouvrages de la nation. Ceux où l'on inspire aux hommes la bienveillance générale sont presque les seuls qui soient lus. Voilà les leçons dont nos théâtres retentissent et dont ils ne peuvent retentir trop souvent; le philosophe dont vous m'avez rappelé les vers [Voltaire] doit principalement ses succès aux sentiments d'humanité qu'il a répandus dans ses poèmes et au pouvoir qu'ils ont sur nos âmes" (vii, 68, Constance in *le Fils naturel*).

"Je vois déjà, dans la société, que si quelqu'un s'avise de montrer une oreille trop délicate, on en rougit pour lui. Le théâtre français attendra-t-il, pour suivre cet exemple, que son dictionnaire soit aussi borné que le dictionnaire du théâtre lyrique et que le nombre des expressions honnêtes soit égal à celui des expressions musicales?" (vii, 131, *Deuxième entretien*).

Yet for the definitive establishment of the new "system" there was need of actors, a stage—from the mere establishing at Paris of a playhouse like that of Lyons, Diderot expected "une multitude de poèmes," "peut-être quelques genres nouveaux," "—perhaps a people,"⁴⁰ and certainly a favorable government, for Diderot believed that the nature and progress of the various literary *genres* were strongly influenced by political circumstances.⁴¹ He was mindful, perhaps, of the impending

⁴⁰ vii, 114 f.

⁴¹ vii, 118.

⁴² Cf. vii, 166, 183, 370; x, 507. V. also d'Alembert, *Discours préliminaire*, ed. Picavet, p. 125.

battle between *philosophes* and *dévots* when he spoke of political catastrophes furnishing the "poetic" and "heroic" material needed by tragic authors:

"C'est lorsque la fureur de la guerre civile ou du fanatisme arme les hommes de poignards, et que le sang coule à grands flots sur la terre, que le laurier d'Apollon s'agite et verdit. Il en veut être arrosé. Il se flétrit dans les temps de la paix et du loisir. Le siècle d'or eût produit une chanson peut-être ou une élégie. La poésie épique et la poésie dramatique demandent d'autres mœurs.

Quand verra-t-on naître des poètes? Ce sera après les temps de désastres et de grands malheurs; lorsque les peuples harrassés commenceront à respirer. Alors les imaginations, ébranlées par des spectacles terribles, peindront des choses inconnues à ceux qui n'en ont pas été témoins...." (vii, 371 f.)

This is not a speculative commonplace, but orthodox Encyclopedic politics. For, combining Du Bos' theory of sudden progress with Buffon's notion of cataclysmic periods, the *Discours préliminaire* of the Encyclopedia states that "la constitution physique du monde littéraire entraîne, comme celle du monde matériel des révolutions forcées, dont il serait aussi injuste de se plaindre que du changement des saisons."⁵⁰ D'Alembert believed that modern society had risen out of barbarism by "une de ces révolutions qui font prendre à la terre une face nouvelle: l'Empire grec est détruit."⁵¹ He expected "une révolution redoutable," "une espèce d'avalanche très funeste," "la barbarie où une foule de circonstances tendent à nous précipiter," to put an end to the literary sterility and "faux goût" which were then prevailing. Probably Diderot thought a "revolution"—in the common meaning of the word—was needed as an antidote to the unpoetic rationalism of the "philosophic spirit." At any rate, he reverted to the idea that sanguinary encounters were artistically fruitful, some fourteen

⁵⁰ D'Alembert, *op. cit.*, p. 119. Cf. also Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité* (1755). There is, to be sure, a long tradition behind this conception, which underlies also the sketch of artistic progress made by Perrault in his *Parallèles*.

⁵¹ D'Alembert, *l. cit.*, p. 78.

years after his first dramatic manifestos, when the *coup d'état* Maupeou persuaded him that "on touche en France à une crise qui aboutira ou à l'esclavage ou à la liberté." He wrote to Wilkes, November 14, 1771:

"Les sciences et les arts nous quittent. Si leur naissance montre un peuple qui sort de la barbarie; leur progrès, un peuple qui s'achemine à la grandeur; leur splendeur, un peuple éclairé, puissant et florissant; leur mépris, leur indigence et leur dégradation doivent marquer un peuple qui descend et qui s'en retourne à la stupidité et à la misère. On me demandait un jour comment on rendait la vigueur à une nation qui l'avait perdue; je répondis comme Médée rendit la jeunesse à son père; en le dépeçant et en le faisant bouillir" (Quoted by Cru, *Diderot*, p. 477).

It is true that when the political and philosophic crises passed, this Jacobin *avant la lettre* would regain his *bourgeoise* composure. Yet it seems that his normal attitude was not unlike that of the present day adepts of the doctrine of evolutionary-revolution. The word "revolution," as ambiguous in meaning with the writers of the eighteenth century as with the Marxists of our days, distinctly favored such an attitude. In one of Diderot's contributions to the *Histoire philosophique des Indes*⁵² which appeared under the name of the Abbé Raynal, we are privileged to see Diderot's alternating a prediction of peace with one of revolution. This is from Diderot the pacifist:

"L'Europe...paraît avoir pris une assiette trop solide et trop fixe pour donner lieu à des révolutions rapides et surprenantes.... Le fanatisme de religion et l'esprit de conquête, ces deux causes perturbatrices du globe, ont cessé..." (iv, 41 f., *Fragments politiques*).

Now, especially in the lines italicized, for the prophet of disaster:

"Si l'on me demande ce que deviendront la philosophie, les lettres et les beaux-arts sous le calme et la durée de ces sociétés mercantiles....je répondrai par une autre question,

⁵² Bk. vi, ch. 1. Diderot worked at Raynal's book in 1765 (xix, 208).

et je demanderai qu'est-ce qu'il y a dans ces objets [*e. g.*, mechanical inventions] qui puisse échauffer les âmes, les élever, y produire l'enthousiasme? Un grand négociant est-il un personnage bien propre à devenir le héros d'un poème épique? Je ne le crois pas. Heureusement, toute cette espèce de luxe n'est pas fort essentielle au bonheur des nations. Peut-être ne trouverait-on pas une belle statue dans toute la Suisse, et je ne pense pas que les treize cantons en soient plus malheureux. *Quelle est la cause des progrès et de l'éclat des lettres et des beaux-arts chez les peuples tant anciens que modernes? La multitude d'actions héroïques et de grands hommes à célébrer. Tarisiez la source des périls, et vous tarisiez en même temps celle des vertus, des forfaits, des historiens, des orateurs et des poètes...* Ce fut dans les temps où cette bête féroce qu'on appelait le peuple romain ou se dévorait elle-même, ou s'occupait à dévorer les nations, que les historiens écrivirent et que les poètes chantèrent. *Ce fut au milieu des troubles civils en Angleterre, en France après les massacres de la Ligue et de la Fronde, que des auteurs immortels parurent.* A mesure que les secousses violentes d'une nation s'apaisent et s'éloignent, les âmes se calment, les images des dangers s'effacent, et les lettres se taisent. Les grands génies se couvent dans les temps difficiles; ils suivent le déclin des nations, ils s'éteignent avec elles; mais comme *il est rare qu'une nation disparaisse sans un long enchaînement de désastres*, alors l'enthousiasme renaît dans quelques âmes privilégiées, et les productions du génie sont un mélange bizarre de bon et de mauvais goût; on y remarque la richesse du moment passé et la misère du moment présent. *Ces génies sont comme les dernières pulsations du pouls d'un moribond.* Français, tâtez-vous le pouls" (iv, 43; cf. xi, 450 f., *Salon de 1769*).

Faithful to his habit, Diderot has crowded here a number of rather disconnected ideas which do not admit an unequivocal interpretation. Was he laboring to make it appear that a peaceful and unartistic epoch was a possible and desirable alternative to a "long chain of disasters" and political revolutions, artistically fruitful? Or did he, confronted with the necessity of choosing between these alternatives, revise and contradict some of his early artistic beliefs? Does his professing that a merchant is not a proper hero for an epic poem imply his recognizing that the *théâtre bourgeois* was a failure,

and does his wish for the absence of statues and silks indicate a slackening in his efforts as a propagator of the fine and useful arts? In the absence of more convincing evidence we cannot assume such a radical change of mind. A less violent explanation of these utterances makes allowance for Diderot's disgust with the utilitarianism and epicureanism of his age. It supposes that he never despaired of civilization being finally brought in close touch with nature, of luxury in some things **being** the companion of simplicity in others, of the "lie" of art being ultimately welded to the truth of everyday reality. Perhaps he thought that his own lifetime marked the period of transition between the two estates, the epoch when "*les productions du génie sont un mélange bizarre de bon et de mauvais goût,*" and "*on y remarque la richesse du moment passé et la misère du moment présent.*" For this characterizes pretty well the dramatic situation of the seventies: on the one side, the old dramatic régime; on the other, a firmly entrenched "*bourgeoise*" tragedy and an incipient "historical" drama, picturing the catastrophes and splendors of the past and bidding the public contrast them with the squalor of the present. But of this more in the following chapter.

ACTING AND HISTORICAL TRAGEDY

I

THE "PARADOX" IS AN ULTRA-RATIONALIST VIEW OF THE ACTOR'S ART

The work which Diderot so aptly headed *Paradoxe sur le comédien* is probably the only one of his esthetic writings that is still widely read. Its warm epigrammatic style, its store of interesting anecdotes of stage life, its baffling obscurities and suggestive glimmers of truth have not been lost, apparently, even on the scientific psychologists who cite the *Paradoxe* in order to refute it. Strange to say, that work and its forerunner, the paper which Diderot published in Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire* of October 1 and November 15, 1770, under the title *Observations sur une brochure intitulée "Garrick ou les acteurs anglais,"* have not yet received sufficient attention from the students of Diderot's ideas, although more than one critic has noticed that they apparently mark a turning point in his philosophy of art.

The premises of the *Paradoxe* and *Observations* are commonplace enough. Indeed, Antonio Fabio Sticotti, the obscure author of *Garrick ou les acteurs anglais*,¹ whom Diderot took to task, had also said that there are certain means of expression a player must be gifted with, such as outward appearance, voice and judgment, and that by dint of study of the requirements of the stage, through worldly experience and imitation of good models, these natural gifts may be greatly improved upon.

Diderot's originality begins with his distinction of three categories of players:²

1. Actors who play by rote and are not worth bothering about.

¹ Adaptation of "Sir" John (not Aaron) Hill's *The Actor: a treatise on the art of playing*, London 1750. The theoretical portion of this book is taken from R. de Sainte-Albine, *Le comédien*, Paris, 1747.

² viii, 344, 363.

2. Those endowed by nature with a large amount of "*sensibilité*." The "*comédien de nature*," guided by his feelings, forgets his own personality, identifying himself with the character he is to represent. The temperamental actor may occasionally play well and even reach sublime heights, depending on the status of his personality. But his presentation is of necessity uneven and often detestable.
3. The players who, whether impervious to emotion or successful in curbing whatever "*sensibilité*" is theirs by birth, deliberately bring to bear on their acting the results of their experience and research. In the words of Aristotle, these are on the stage "imitators" throughout, always mindful of dramatic effect, and it is from their ranks that the really great mimes, the peers of Roscius and Garrick, have been recruited.

This enumeration has already suggested the thesis of Diderot, to the effect that an inverse ratio obtains between histrionic talent and emotionalism. According to him, the "actor of genius" is intellect without "sensitivity." In other words—and here we see why it is a "paradox" with which we are dealing—in order that the player should create in the minds of the audience the illusion of a man swayed by emotion he himself must not share in such illusion and emotion.

"C'est l'extrême sensibilité qui fait les acteurs médiocres; c'est la sensibilité médiocre qui fait la multitude des mauvais acteurs, et c'est le manque absolu de sensibilité qui prépare les acteurs sublimes" (viii, 370).

"Moi, je lui veux beaucoup de jugement [Diderot is talking of the great actor]; il me faut dans cet homme un spectateur froid et tranquille; j'en exige, par conséquent, de la pénétration et nulle sensibilité, l'art de tout imiter, ou, ce qui revient au même, une égale aptitude à toutes sortes de caractères et de rôles" (viii, 365; cf. 345).

"Les hommes chauds, violents, sensibles sont en scène, ils donnent le spectacle, mais ils n'en jouissent pas. C'est d'après eux que l'homme de génie fait sa copie. Les grands

poètes, les grands acteurs, et peut-être en général tous les grands imitateurs de la nature, quels qu'ils soient, doués d'une belle imagination, d'un grand jugement, d'un tact fin, d'un goût très sûr, sont les êtres les moins sensibles. Ils sont également propres à trop de choses; ils sont trop occupés à regarder, à reconnaître et à imiter, pour être vivement affectés au dedans d'eux-mêmes. Je les vois sans cesse le portefeuille sur les genoux et le crayon à la main. Nous sentons, nous; eux, ils observent, étudient et peignent" (viii, 368, cf. 347).

Accordingly, a great actor reflects like a mirror the expression and attitudes of men and feels not what is behind the visible surface. The play ended, the actor is tired, and you, spectator, are sad. Why?

"C'est qu'il s'est démené sans rien sentir, et que vous avez senti sans vous démener. S'il en était autrement, la condition du comédien serait la plus malheureuse des conditions; mais il n'est pas le personnage, il le joue et le joue si bien que vous le prenez pour tel: l'illusion n'est que pour vous; il sait bien, lui, qu'il ne l'est pas" (viii, 370).

... "Qu'est-ce donc que le vrai talent? Celui de bien connaître les symptômes extérieurs de l'âme d'emprunt, de s'adresser à la sensation de ceux qui nous entendent, qui nous voient, et de les tromper par l'imitation de ces symptômes, par une imitation qui agrandisse tout dans leurs têtes et qui devienne la règle de leur jugement; car il est impossible d'apprécier autrement ce qui se passe au dedans de nous. Et que nous importe en effet qu'ils sentent ou qu'ils ne sentent pas, pourvu que nous l'ignorions?" (viii, 404).

II

DIDEROT'S CHANGE OF OPINION ON THIS SUBJECT

Paradoxical because of its vehement denunciation of "sensibility," the *Paradoxe sur le comédien* is likewise completely at variance with Diderot's other utterances in which feeling is set down as essential to histrionic and general artistic ability and effectiveness, such as the following from the *Second entretien sur le Fils naturel*:

"Heureusement une actrice, d'un jugement borné, d'une pénétration commune, mais d'une grande sensibilité, saisit sans peine une situation d'âme, et trouve, sans y penser, l'accent qui convient à plusieurs sentiments différents qui se fondent ensemble, et qui constituent cette situation que toute la sagacité du philosophe n'analyserait pas. Les poètes, les acteurs, les musiciens, les peintres, les chanteurs de premier ordre, les grands danseurs, les amants tendres, les vrais dévots, toute cette troupe enthousiaste et passionnée sent vivement, et réfléchit peu" (vii, 108).

Likewise, in *De la Poésie dramatique*:

"Acteurs, jouissez donc de vos droits; faites ce que le moment et votre talent vous inspireront. Si vous êtes de chair, si vous avez des entrailles, tout ira bien, sans que je m'en mêle; et j'aurai beau m'en mêler, tout ira mal si vous êtes de marbre ou de bois" (vii, 386).

Similar in purport is the following passage from the Encyclopedia article on "Genius":

"Dans la chaleur de l'enthousiasme il [i. e., genius] ne dispose ni de la nature, ni de la suite des idées; il est transporté dans la situation des personnages qu'il fait agir; il a pris leur caractère; s'il éprouve dans le plus haut degré les passions héroïques...il produit le sublime" (xv, 36, art. *Génie*," 1757).

Whereas in the *Paradoxe* the man of genius, whether player or artist of another kind, is compared to a "perfect mirror" which, itself untroubled, faithfully reflects the nature of things, we learn from the opening pages of the *Second entretien* that "if there is no enthusiasm, the true idea either fails to appear, or if it perchance be hit upon, cannot be pursued."¹

This enthusiastic spell is, moreover, the very antithesis of the condition of cold, tranquil lucidity that precedes artistic creation, according to the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*. The physiological effects of "enthusiasm" as conceived in 1757 comprise a feeling of heat accompanied by hallucinations; the poet's only outlet of relief is through "a torrent of ideas that press,

¹ vii, 103.

shock and pursue one another." The trance once passed, the memory of it is lost. We read in the *Second entretien* that Dorval who had experienced such a state of exaltation "asked like a man who awakes from slumber: 'What did I say? What was I to talk about? I no longer remember.'"²

These details are not without importance, as they left certain traces in the *Paradox*. For, curiously enough, Diderot occasionally associates pathological concomitants with artistic endeavor in those pages of the last named work in which he forgets to revise his older theory of the nature of enthusiasm.

In the same spirit, the seventeenth chapter of *De la Poésie dramatique* teaches concerning "genius," "enthusiasm" or "inspiration" that it is fitful, not abiding, as represented in the *Paradoxe*:

"Nous ne confondrons, ni vous, ni moi, l'homme qui vit, pense, agit et se meut au milieu des autres; et l'homme enthousiaste qui prend la plume, l'archet, le pinceau, ou qui monte sur ses tréteaux. Hors de lui, il est tout ce qu'il plaît à l'art qui le domine. Mais l'instant de l'inspiration passé, il rentre et redevient ce qu'il était; quelquefois un homme commun. Car telle est la différence de l'esprit et du génie, que l'un est presque toujours présent, et que souvent l'autre s'absente" (vii, 363).

A survey of the writings of Diderot in chronological order reveals the fact that he was only gradually won to the anti-emotionalist point of view. We need not tarry over the epistles to Mme Riccoboni on acting (1758), because they are too ambiguously worded to shed light on the subject we are investigating. (This holds true even of an observation found therein concerning the histrionic ability of Garrick.)³ But the letters which Diderot wrote to an insignificant actress, Mlle Jodin, are much more instructive. In the first, dated August 27, 1765,

² Cf. the trance of Rameau's nephew in *le Neveu de Rameau* (written in 1762, revised in 1773; v, 437). It is interesting to compare these with the "délire" of Rousseau as described in his letter to President de Malesherbes, Jan. 12, 1762.

³ vii, 402.

we find these significant words concerning the process of "aliénation" whereby an actor loses his identity in his rôle:

"Je vous ai peu entendue, mais j'ai cru vous reconnaître une grande qualité qu'on peut simuler peut-être à force d'art et d'étude, *mais qui ne s'acquiert pas*: une âme qui s'aliène, qui s'affecte profondément, qui se transporte sur les lieux, *qui est telle ou telle*, qui voit et qui parle à tel ou tel personnage. J'ai été satisfait lorsque au sortir d'un mouvement violent, vous paraissiez revenir de fort loin et reconnaître à peine, l'endroit d'où vous n'étiez pas sortie et les objets qui vous environnaient" (xix, 382).

The words now italicised show that Diderot still believed in the enthusiastic trance, even after he had become acquainted with Garrick, that is to say, after the circumstance in which certain scholars have perceived the occasion for Diderot's suddenly embracing his "paradox." Diderot's advice in a subsequent letter, "Je suis bien aise de voir que votre âme a conservé sa sensibilité et son honnêteté,"⁵ may or may not be significant, as well as the words of caution in another: "Ménagez votre sensibilité, ne vous livrez que par gradation."⁶ But that Diderot was not at that time (about 1766) a sheer intellectualist, in spite of the recommendation "que votre tête devienne un portefeuille d'images," is apparent, because he also wrote: "Quand l'âme inspire, on ne sait jamais ce qu'on fera, comment on dira. C'est le moment, la situation de l'âme qui dicte, voilà les seuls bons maîtres, les seuls bons souffleurs"⁷—a belief that is contradicted in the *Paradoxe*.

From these and similar utterances⁸ it is evident that about 1767 Diderot prescribed that the balance be struck between feeling and judgment, his views being thus summed up by himself:

"Un acteur qui n'a que du sens et du jugement est froid; celui qui n'a que de la verve et de la sensibilité est fou.

⁴ *Contra*. R. L. Cru, *Diderot* (New York, 1913), p. 330; F. A. Hedgcock, *Garrick et ses amis* (Paris, 1911), p. 174; F. Baldensperger, in *Revue d'hist. littér.*, xx (1913), p. 451.

⁵ xix, 385; cf. xix, 461.

⁶ xix, 388.

⁷ xix, 390.

⁸ Cf. also x, 234 (*Réfl. s. Térence*, 1762).

C'est un certain tempérament de bon sens et de chaleur qui fait l'homme sublime; et sur la scène et dans le monde celui qui montre plus qu'il ne sent fait rire au lieu de toucher. Ne cherchez donc jamais à aller au delà du sentiment que vous aurez; tâchez de le rendre juste" (xix, 389).

The same result is yielded by the study of the *Salons*⁹ and especially of that of 1767 containing the theory of idealism to which Diderot proclaimed his adherence in the *Paradoxe*. There, in the course of a conversation between Garrick and the Chevalier de Chastellux, the English actor is made to say that he played after an ideal model. It is impossible, however, to agree with those critics who read into this a profession of anti-emotionalism. Not only does Garrick confess to strong feelings in the very passage in question; not only did the *Salon* of 1765 say that Garrick was a master not so much of his expression as of his soul, the emotion of which "disposed of his body;"¹⁰ but in the same *Salon* of 1767 one finds ample proof that Diderot had not broken with emotionalism.¹¹ The secret of an artist's appeal, he said (and his mentioning Le Couvreur is proof that this applies to actors), resided in ability to unite emotion and esthetic considerations.

[Diderot]— ... "On a dit:

.... Si vis me flere, dolendum est

Primum ipsi tibi...

Mais tu pleureras tout seul, sans que je sois tenté de mêler une larme aux tiennes, si je ne puis me substituer à ta place: il faut que je m'accroche à l'extrémité de la corde qui te tient suspendu dans les airs, ou je ne frémirai pas.

[L'abbé] — Ah! j'entends à présent.

— Quoi, l'abbé?

— Je fais deux rôles, je suis double; je suis Le Couvreur et je reste moi. C'est le moi le Couvreur qui frémit et qui souffre, et c'est le moi tout court qui a du plaisir.

— Fort bien, l'abbé; et voilà la limite de l'imitateur de la nature. Si je m'oublie trop et trop longtemps, la

⁹ Cf. x, 312, 490, 520 (*Salon de 1765 and Essai sur la peinture*).

¹⁰ x, 425. This after Diderot had become acquainted with the English actor.

¹¹ xi, 35, 125, 152, 146, 208. *Sed contra* xi, 151.

terreur est trop forte; si je ne m'oublie point du tout, si je reste toujours un, elle est trop faible; c'est ce juste tempérament qui fait verser des larmes délicieuses" (xi, 119 f.)

Not until we read in the *Rêve de d'Alembert* (1769) that "la sensibilité...est la qualité dominante des êtres médiocres"¹¹ do we find something approaching the "paradox." Although Diderot denounces in that work *morbid* "sensibility" alone (just as he had done some twenty years earlier in the *Lettre sur les sourds*),¹² yet the following characterization of "la sensibilité" is so fraught with notions that are closely paralleled in the *Observations and Paradoxe* as to leave no room for doubt that Diderot wanted only the provocation of Sticotti, absurdly "emotionalist" at times, to defend the intellectualist point of view.

"Qu'est-ce qu'un être sensible? Un être abandonné à la discrétion du diaphragme. Un mot touchant a-t-il frappé l'oreille, un phénomène singulier a-t-il frappé l'œil, et voilà tout à coup le tumulte intérieur qui s'élève, tous les brins du faisceau qui s'agitent, le frisson qui se répand, l'horreur qui saisit, les larmes qui coulent, les soupirs qui suffoquent, la voix qui s'interrompt, l'origine du faisceau qui ne sait ce qu'il devient; plus de sang froid, plus de raison, plus de jugement, plus d'instinct, plus de ressource... Le grand homme, s'il a malheureusement reçu cette disposition naturelle s'occupera sans relâche à l'affaiblir, à la dominer, à se rendre maître de ses mouvements et à conserver à l'origine du faisceau tout son empire. Alors il se possédera au milieu des plus grands dangers, il jugera froidement, mais sainement. Rien de ce qui peut servir à ses vues, concourir à son but ne lui échappera; on l'étonnera difficilement; il aura quarante-cinq ans; il sera grand roi, grand ministre, grand artiste, surtout grand comédien, grand philosophe, grand poète, grand musicien, grand médecin; il régnera sur lui-même et sur tout ce qui l'environne" (ii, 171; cf. vii, 394).

Diderot does not contradict himself when he sums up this eulogy of the Encyclopedist in art (and politics) in these words: "Les êtres sensibles ou les fous sont en scène, il est

¹¹ ii, 170.

¹² i, 408.

au parterre; c'est lui qui est le sage." True, in the *Paradoxe*, the positions of the wise man and the fool are reversed. But the actor after Diderot's heart remains a spectator even on the stage.

III

THE "PARADOX" IS WHAT THE TERM IMPLIES. DIDEROT WAS A MODERATE "OBJECTIVIST" WHO EXTENDED TO ACTING THE THEORY OF IMITATION

That Diderot's real opinion struck a balance between extreme emotionalism and thoroughgoing intellectualism, is as certain as the fact that he *professed* those opposite beliefs at two distinct periods of his literary career. Yet in spite of his vehement assertion, Diderot never quite *believed* that an actor who feels is lost. This is established not only by the less "paradoxical" character of his utterances outside of the two essays on acting, even after 1770;¹ but also by the admissions and commissions of the *Paradoxe* itself. Confining our attention to the latter and the *Observations sur Garrick*, we may briefly notice a few vestiges of Diderot's old way of thinking. For instance, in the *Observations*, "*la sensibilité*" figures among the natural prerequisites of good acting, a proposition inadvertently borrowed from Sticotti, but which invalidates Diderot's thesis. While this error was corrected in the *Paradoxe*, other inconsistencies were not removed. Thus, the anti-emotionalist efforts of Diderot were frustrated when he wrote:

"Il n'en est pas de la Dumesnil ainsi que de la Clairon. Elle monte sur les planches sans savoir ce qu'elle dira; la moitié du temps elle ne sait ce qu'elle dit, mais il vient un moment sublime. Et pourquoi l'acteur différerait-il du peintre, de l'orateur, du musicien? Ce n'est pas dans la fureur du premier jet que les traits caractéristiques se présentent, c'est dans des moments tranquilles et froids, dans des moments

¹ v, 250 (*Observ. sur les Saisons*, 1769); xi, 409 (*Salon de 1769*); xii, 398 (*Leçons de clavecin*, 1771); ii, 254 (*Sur les femmes*, 1772); ii, 332, 342 (*Réfut. d'Helvétius*, 1773-74); xii, 88 (*Pensées détachées*, 1776-80).

tout à fait inattendus. On ne sait d'où ces traits viennent; ils tiennent de l'inspiration. C'est lorsque, suspendus entre la nature et leur ébauche, ces génies portent alternativement un œil attentif sur l'une et l'autre; les beautés d'inspiration, les traits fortuits qu'ils répandent dans leurs ouvrages, et dont l'apparition subite les étonne eux-mêmes, sont d'un effet et d'un succès bien autrement assurés que ce qu'ils y ont jeté de boutade. C'est au sang-froid à tempérer le délire de l'enthousiasme" (viii, 367).

Diderot forgot, it seems, that in the *Paradoxe* he had also declared that genius is not subject to fluctuations. The "altogether unexpected" "cold and tranquil moments" which "partake of inspiration" are no less fitful than the enthusiastic spells of the *Entretiens avec Dorval*. Nor is this all. Diderot speaks of Mlle Clairon as being "double," at once herself and the tragic personage, thus contradicting one of the mainstays of the "paradox," the indivisibility of consciousness. In fact, in the above passage, Diderot lapsed to the standpoint of the *Salon* of 1767, according to which an actor might be quite moved and yet able to remember his lines and watch his expression and "business."²

Still further incongruities come to light if the *Paradoxe* is compared with the *Observations* which preceded it. The "ruptures de raisonnement," "déviation de la pensée," "bizarreries," and even "non-sens"³ disclosed in the *Paradoxe* as a result of such a comparison, added to the fact that, despite its increase in size, the last named work contains but few "idées nouvelles, j'entends d'idées intéressant le vrai sujet," have led M. Ernest Dupuy to ascribe to Naigeon and not to Diderot the elaboration of the earlier paper into the *Paradoxe*. Unfortunately for M. Dupuy's hypothesis, M. Bédier has shown that it is paleographically untenable.⁴ It could also be easily shown that the other argument on which M. Dupuy's thesis rests, i. e., the assumption that Diderot, an improvisator *par excellence* could

² The Abbé Morellet would have hailed Diderot's "paradox" as a "paradoxe de contradiction". (*Théorie du paradoxe*, Amsterdam, 1775, p. 97 f.)

³ *Paradoxe*, ed. Dupuy (Paris 1902), p. xiv.

⁴ J. Bédier, *Études critiques* (Paris, 1903), pp. 83-112.

not repeat himself as he obviously does in the *Paradoxe*, is a supposition contradicted by everything Diderot wrote, as well as by his own statement as to his method of working. Diderot is one of the authors who most often repeat themselves.⁶ Yet M. Dupuy's observations concerning the want of logic in the *Paradoxe* are incontrovertible.⁷ The inferiority of that work to the *Observations* might be explained, however, on the hypothesis that it is due to Diderot's anxiety to pass off as true what he was not profoundly convinced of.

Fortunately, there is no need to pursue this indirect demonstration, as Diderot himself framed a definition of "sensibility" which limits considerably the scope of the "paradox."

"Ce serait un singulier abus des mots [writes he] que d'appeler sensibilité cette facilité de rendre toutes natures, même les natures féroces. La sensibilité, selon la seule acception qu'on ait donnée jusqu'à présent à ce terme, est, ce me semble, cette disposition compagne de la faiblesse des organes, suite de la mobilité du diaphragme, de la vivacité de l'imagination, de la délicatesse des nerfs, qui incline à compatir, à frissonner, à admirer, à craindre, à se troubler, à pleurer, à s'évanouir, à secourir, à fuir, à crier, à perdre la raison, à exagérer, à mépriser, à dédaigner, à n'avoir aucune idée précise du vrai, du bon et du beau, à être injuste, à être fou" (viii, 393; cf. ii, 171).

This definition of "*la sensibilité*" must be taken in conjunction with that of "*l'homme sensible*," in a passage which recalls that already reproduced from the *Rêve de d'Alembert*:

"L'homme sensible est trop abandonné à la merci de son diaphragme pour être un grand roi, un grand politique, un grand magistrat, un homme juste, un profond observateur, et conséquemment un sublime imitateur de la nature, à moins qu'il ne puisse s'oublier et se distraire de lui-même, et qu'à l'aide d'une imagination forte il ne sache se créer, et d'une mémoire tenace tenir son attention fixée sur des fantômes qui lui servent de modèles; mais alors ce n'est plus lui qui agit, c'est l'esprit d'un autre qui le domine" (viii, 408).

⁶ M. Tourneux, *Diderot et Catherine II* (Paris, 1899), p. 448 f. Cf. his paper in *Revue d'hist. littér.*, ix (1902), p. 512 f.

⁷ Cf. also A. Binet, "Réflexions sur le paradoxe de Diderot" in *l'Année psychologique*, iii (1897), p. 279 f.

It is easy to see that these cardinal definitions pull down the elaborate structure built by Diderot in defense of his "paradox." If "*l'homme sensible*" is a whimsical, uneven being, always engrossed in his present emotion, never able to work for a definite end, if he is fatally condemned "*à être fou*," he will be good for nothing, as his definition provides, and as little fitted for an actor's career as for any other. So that we may ask with Mr. William Archer, Where is the paradox? If, on the other hand, "*la sensibilité*" may be checked by an effort of the "imagination," as is implied in the paragraph last quoted, Diderot's artistic psychology is not contrary to that of most of his predecessors and contemporaries—the elder Riccoboni, Sainte-Albine, Hill, Sticotti, and others—who admitted the necessity of an actor's combining "reason" or "judgment" with "sensibility" or "*entrailles*," even though they also liked to descant on the histrionic marvels wrought by feeling.⁷

If Diderot had been minded to defend his paradox to the last, he should have expressly recanted his earlier belief that "*le technique c'est la mort du génie*," or at least have refuted Grimm's reasons for regarding genius as something that defies analysis. Instead,⁸ we see him resorting to the proposition which Grimm had declared irrelevant, that mimetic talent and moral character are correlated, which comes very near the view held by Diderot in his "emotionalist" period, that the esthetic and moral senses are correlated. Again, Diderot says that, when inspired, it is not the actor himself who performs his part, but the mind of another using the player as a puppet, as if this were incompatible with the concept of "*aliénation*"

⁷ W. Archer, *Masks or faces?* (London, 1888), p. 36.

⁸ A very few held that exaggerated physical sensibility might prove embarrassing, notably François Riccoboni, *L'Art du théâtre* (1750) p. 15. Cf. the speech of Macklin mentioned in the *Saint James' Chronicle*, Nov. 6, 1773, alluded to by Diderot, viii, 422. Similar ideas of Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister* were inspired by Diderot, according to C. A. Eggert, in *Modern Language Notes*, 1896, col. 205 ff.

⁹ viii, 359. Diderot once acknowledges that genius is irreducible (iv, 26 f.)

¹⁰ viii, 358 f. Cf. vii, 389.

he had made the most of in his "emotionalist" days." To make a bad matter worse, he explicitly concedes that as a rule the cold and tranquil instants of inspiration are preceded by emotional states:

"Est-ce au moment où vous venez de perdre votre ami ou votre maîtresse que vous composerez un poème sur sa mort? Non, malheur à celui qui jouit alors de son talent! C'est lorsque la grande douleur est passée, quand l'extrême sensibilité est amortie (viii, 386).

"Je ne doute point que la Clairon n'éprouve le tourment du Quesnoy dans ses premières tentatives; mais la lutte passée, lorsqu'elle s'est une fois élevée à la hauteur de son fantôme, elle se possède, elle se répète sans émotion" (viii, 366; cf. vii, 346, 103 and xi, 144 f.)

But this, *pace* Diderot, is but the theory of "reasonable enthusiasm," the "inspiration réfléchie" applied to acting, which, far from being paradoxical, was public property from the time of Castelvetro.²²

It is not surprising, then, that Diderot all but gave up his "paradox" when he intimated that the faculty of "*sentir*" is a mode not of "sensitivity" but of "judgment," which is but another way of saying that intellect does not necessarily exclude emotion.²³ It would appear from the following paragraph that Diderot acknowledged that he intended, not to proscribe feeling altogether but to establish its sufficiency as a sole guide to artistic production.

"C'est qu'être sensible est une chose, et sentir est une autre; l'une est une affaire d'âme, l'autre une affaire de jugement. C'est qu'on sent avec force et que l'on ne saurait rendre; c'est qu'on rend, seul, en société, au coin du foyer,

²²vii, 404. He elsewhere (vi, 456) speaks of an "enthousiasme qui allène l'homme de lui même et le rend impassible, rare parmi nous [mais] commun chez le sauvage."

²³Cf. vi, 412 (*Réflexion sur l'ode*, 1770); Shaftesbury, *Letter concerning enthusiasm* (1708); Marmontel, *Poétique française* (1763) i, 69, 73 and the authors cited by Mornet in *Revue d'Hist. litt.*, xxi (1914), p. 608-614.

²⁴Diderot's belief in somatic and psychic interaction and parallelism (viii, 370, 349; xi, 145 f. etc.) favored an intermediate position between intellectualism and emotionalism.

en lisant, en jouant pour quelques auditeurs, et qu'on ne rend rien qui vaille au théâtre; c'est qu'au théâtre avec ce qu'on appelle de la sensibilité, de l'âme, des entrailles, on rend bien une ou deux tirades et qu'on manque le reste; c'est qu'embrasser toute l'étendue d'un grand rôle....et se former un système soutenu de déclamation qui aille jusqu'à sauver les boutades du poète, c'est l'ouvrage d'une tête froide, d'un profond jugement, d'un goût exquis, d'une étude pénible, d'une longue expérience et d'une ténacité de mémoire peu commune...." (viii, 415 f.)

Here it is evident that by the word "*sentir*" Diderot designates the function which is named "*sensibilité*" in his Treatise of Physiology, where it is defined as a "qualité propre à l'animal qui l'avertit des rapports qui sont entre lui et tout ce qui l'environne."¹⁴ Practically identical is the definition contained in a letter to Mlle Volland, dated October 11, 1760: "Qu'est-ce que la sensibilité? L'effet vif sur notre âme d'une infinité d'observations délicates que nous rapprochons. Cette qualité, dont la nature nous donne le germe, s'étouffe ou se vivifie donc par l'âge, l'expérience, la réflexion."¹⁵ Sensibility is, in this sense, the faculty by which man enters *en rapport* with his environment and, *in specie*, the player adjusts his acting to the system of declamation and conventions of the drama;¹⁶ just the opposite of "*la sensibilité*" as understood in the *Paradoxe*.

This sort of "*sensibilité*" that is not harmful to artistic endeavors is quite incompatible with the propensity which leads an actor to "ranting;" but, once more, it is not a faculty that excludes or inhibits emotion as such.¹⁷ It appears to include all the psychic processes that are vulgarly designated as "feelings," i. e., both perceptive and affective phenomena. Its esthetic efficacy is due to its association in Diderot's psychophysiology with the "imagination," the esthetic function *par excellence*, which rouses ideas and feelings and quickens them, by their interplay. The *Pensées détachées sur la peinture, la sculpture, l'architecture et la poésie*¹⁸ give unambiguous expres-

¹⁴ ix, 267.

¹⁵ xix, 26.

¹⁶ Cf. ii, 114.

¹⁷ Cf. art. "*Génie*," xv, 35 f.

¹⁸ Put together in 1776 at the earliest.

sion to this dualistic conception of the act of artistic creation: "Il y a deux sortes d'enthousiasme, l'enthousiasme de l'âme et celui du métier. Sans l'un le concept est froid, sans l'autre l'exécution est faible, c'est leur union qui rend l'ouvrage sublime."¹⁹ The "*jugement*" which is also "*sentir*" is the natural ally of these two sorts of enthusiasm and identical with the "imaginative sympathy" of the moderate emotionalist, the "Paradox" notwithstanding.

Had not enough already been said, we might show in the avowedly "emotionalist" writings of Diderot the seeds from which, given time and provocative circumstances, the "paradox" derived its being. Such an undertaking would merely illustrate what has been long apparent, that the mind of Diderot was in a state of flux.²⁰ Yet he has disarmed the criticism of the stickler for consistency by a candid confession: "J'ai prononcé là-dessus autrefois un peu légèrement," (thus apropos of another order of ideas;) "à tout moment je donne dans l'erreur... J'abandonne une thèse fautive de mots qui rendent bien mes raisons. J'ai au fond de mon cœur une chose et j'en dis une autre."²¹ Diderot's thought oozed out of the network of logical categories because it was as fluid and complex as Nature itself, and because all he said was uttered with a view to action. It is not fair to condemn as contradiction that which, viewed historically and pragmatically, is a synthesis of opposite elements.

IV

IDEO-REALISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE "PARADOXE". PERFECT ACTING POSSIBLE ONLY IN THE REGENERATED THEATRE OF THE FUTURE. THE "SYSTEM OF NATURE" POSTULATES A NEW KIND OF HISTORICAL TRAGEDY. —

DIDEROT'S "PARADOX" EVIDENCE OF REACTION AGAINST
INCIPIENT ROMANTICISM

If from the psychological aspect of the *Paradoxe* the reader passes to its esthetic implications he may be struck by

¹⁹ xii, 88. Cf. x, 519 f., xi, 409 f. It is worth noting in this connection that the *Salon* of 1767 (xi, 293) speaks of "ce qu'on appelle tact, instinct, esprit de la chose, goût naturel."

²⁰ Cf. also the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* with the *Laws* and *Republic*.

²¹ xi, 179.

another apparent contradiction. In Diderot's theoretical works of 1757-58, he had been most insistent on the similarity of the stage world and the real: "Il n'y a rien de ce qui se passe dans le monde qui ne puisse avoir lieu sur la scène."²² It is therefore surprising to read in the *Paradoxe sur le comédien* that, on the contrary, "rien ne se passe exactement sur la scène comme en nature," and to come across a definition of theatrical truth like the following:

"Réfléchissez un moment sur ce qu'on appelle au théâtre 'être vrai': Est-ce y montrer les choses comme elles sont en nature? Aucunement. Le vrai en ce sens ne serait que le commun. Qu'est-ce donc le vrai de la scène? C'est la conformité des actions, des discours, de la figure, de la voix, du mouvement, du geste, avec un modèle idéal imaginé par le poète, et souvent exagéré par le comédien" (viii, 373; cf. 349).

Of such statements there are not a few. They may be supplemented by others in which Diderot seems to be won to pseudo-Classical sectarianism of *la belle nature* and to bow to the "proprieties":

"Les passions outrées sont presque toutes sujettes à des grimaces que l'artiste sans goût copie servilement, mais que le grand artiste évite. Nous voulons qu'au plus fort des tourments l'homme garde le caractère d'homme, la dignité de son espèce. Quel est l'effet de cet effort héroïque? De distraire de la douleur et de la tempérer. Nous voulons que cette femme tombe avec décence, avec mollesse, et que ce héros meure comme le gladiateur ancien, au milieu de l'arène, aux applaudissements du cirque, avec grâce, avec noblesse, dans une attitude élégante et pittoresque...."²³

"Poètes, travaillez-vous pour une nation délicate, vaporeuse et sensible; renfermez-vous dans les harmonieuses, tendres et touchantes élégies de Racine; elle se sauverait des boucheries de Shakespeare: ces âmes faibles sont incapables de supporter des secousses violentes. Gardez-vous bien de leur présenter des images trop fortes" (viii, 393 f.)

²² vii, 378.

²³ viii, 373. Cf. also Diderot about the Laocoon group, x, 422, 488.

To account for this apparent discrepancy, it has been said that, converted at last to the tenets of artistic idealism, to which he pays tribute more than once in the *Paradoxe* and the *Salons*, Diderot turned against all the idols of his youth, including the *théâtre bourgeois*, so that "ici encore Diderot est la contradiction faite homme."²⁴

But the contradiction is only in appearance. To realize this, let us begin with the following bit of dialogue in the *Paradoxe*, which suggests that the "idealism" seemingly recommended by Diderot is merely accepted for such artists as cannot reach the sublime heights of naturalism:

"Vous voyez qu'il n'est pas même permis d'imiter la nature, même la belle nature, la vérité de trop près, et qu'il est des limites dans lesquelles il faut se renfermer. — Et ces limites, qui les a posées? — Le bon sens, qui ne veut pas qu'un talent nuise à un autre talent. Il faut quelquefois que l'acteur se sacrifie au poète. — Mais si la composition du poète s'y prêtait? — Eh bien! vous auriez une autre sorte de tragédie tout à fait différente de la vôtre. — Et quel inconvénient à cela? — Je ne sais pas trop ce que vous y gagneriez; mais je sais très bien ce que vous y perdriez... Pour un poète de génie qui atteindrait à cette prodigieuse vérité de Nature, il s'élèverait une nuée d'insipides et plats imitateurs. Il n'est pas permis, sous peine d'être insipide, maussade, détestable, de descendre d'une ligne au-dessous de la simplicité de Nature" (viii, 420 f.)

Yet other sayings of his show that he was far from being consistently benevolent toward the "poet" for whom the actor was *sometimes* to sacrifice his talent and devotion to naturalistic truth. The "altogether different tragedy" of "prodigious truth to nature" whereof he speaks is undoubtedly the one by comparison to which he had condemned that of Corneille and the pseudo-Classicist tragedy of imitation in the *Bijoux indiscrets*.²⁵ The necessity of pleading for his own *genre sérieux*, ten years

²⁴ J. Reinach, *Diderot* (Paris, 1894), p. 158. E. Newman, *Gluck and the opera*, London, 1895, p. 251, note. Curiously enough, F. Luitz, in the edition of the *Paradoxe* published in *Bibliotheca romana*, is inclined to trace to Lessing Diderot's conversion to idealism.

²⁵ iv, 285.

afterwards, temporarily halted his onslaught on the fashionable tragic genre. But when the Encyclopedia had weathered all the storms that threatened its existence, Diderot had the leisure to indulge in his iconoclastic propensities.²⁸ In the intimacy of the *Salon* of 1767, after stating that the artist spreads the motley mantle of his imagination over the canvas formed by the "*cris de nature*," i. e., the silent pauses and incoherent phrases prompted by genuine emotion in real life, Diderot said that the imagination of Racine was too riotous, that it hid too much of that simple "nature" which is the backbone of art:

"La passion ne fait que des esquisses. Que fait donc un poète qui finit tout? Il tourne le dos à la nature. Mais Racine? — Racine! A ce nom, je me prosterne, et je me tais. Il y a un technique traditionnel, auquel l'homme de génie se conforme. Ce n'est plus d'après la nature, c'est d'après ce technique qu'on le juge" (xi, 254).

The greatness of Racine is due not to his being true, but to his having been able to retain so much of truth amidst a heap of conventional lies. "Le grand homme n'est pas celui qui fait vrai, c'est celui qui sait le mieux concilier le mensonge avec la vérité." Not only is this theme reiterated in the *Observations* and *Paradoxe*, but Diderot made bold to say that, when meted out with the "precise measure" of nature, both Racine and Shakespeare were seen to be woefully deficient. None of the French critics of Racine,²⁹ not even the German disciples and students of Diderot (their name is legion, from Lessing to Goethe), dared to dispose of Racine in so cavalier a fashion as this man who in reality idolized him.³⁰

"Le premier. — ...Croyez-vous que les scènes de Corneille de Racine, de Voltaire, même de Shakespeare, puissent se débiter avec votre voix de conversation et le ton du coin de votre âtre? Pas plus que l'histoire du coin de votre âtre avec l'emphase et l'ouverture de bouche du théâtre.

²⁸ *Contra*, Carl Becker, "The dilemma of Diderot," in *Philos. Review*, xxiv (1915), pp. 54-71.

²⁹ La Motte, Voltaire, Rousseau, Buffon, Mercier, etc.

³⁰ Cf. ii, 342; v, 397; viii, 371.

Le Second. — C'est que peut-être Racine et Corneille, tout grands hommes qu'ils étaient, n'ont rien fait qui vaille.

Le Premier. — Quel blasphème! Qui est-ce qui oserait le préférer? Qui est-ce qui oserait y applaudir?" (viii, 371).

Despite Diderot's precaution of putting into the mouth of the second interlocutor the opinion of the first, we are now able to appreciate at its true value his seeming departure from the gospel of realism. The actor's feelings, he declared (and here we perceive the connecting link between the theory of acting and that of tragedy), cannot possibly guide him in the rendering of tragic parts because tragedy, as it obtained in France in the eighteenth century had no foundation in nature. Diderot²⁰ saw in the tragic heroes mere "fantômes imaginaires de la poésie," "des espèces d'hippogriffes," that would provoke our mirth the minute they should step off the artificial world of the stage. To ascribe to them the sentiments common to the ordinary run of mortals meant to destroy the slender amount of illusion which the tragic stage was able to produce by virtue of its being consistently "*merveilleux*":

Le Premier. —Lorsque, par une longue habitude du théâtre on garde dans la société l'emphase de théâtre et qu'on y promène Brutus, Cinna, Mithridate, Cornélie, Mérope, Pompée, savez-vous ce qu'on fait? On accouple à une âme petite ou grande, de la mesure précise que Nature l'a donnée, les signes extérieurs d'une âme exagérée et gigantesque qu'on n'a pas: et de là naît le ridicule.

Le Second. — La cruelle satire que vous faites là, innocemment ou malignement, des acteurs et des auteurs!

Le Premier. — Comment cela?

Le Second. — Il est, je crois, permis à tout le monde d'avoir une âme forte et grande: il est, je crois, permis d'avoir le maintien, le propos et l'action de son âme, et je crois que l'image de la véritable grandeur ne peut jamais être ridicule.

Le Premier. — Que s'ensuit-il de là?

²⁰ Cf. Molière (Dorante) in *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes*, sc. 6.

Le Second. — Ah, traître! vous n'osez le dire, et il faudra que j'encoure l'indignation générale pour vous. C'est que la vraie tragédie est encore à trouver, et qu'avec leurs défauts les anciens en étaient peut-être plus voisins que nous" (viii, 405).

If "la vraie tragédie est encore à trouver," it follows that Diderot did regard conventionality not as the norm of the theatre but as an abuse calling for remedy. And by the same token, the definition of dramatic truth, to which appeal those who see in Diderot a convert to "idealism" pure and simple, appears not as an esthetic imperative but as a statement of regrettable fact. If "rien ne se passe exactement sur la scène comme en nature," it is because the plays are "tous composés d'après un certain système de principes," and the dramatic heroes are "des êtres inconnus," mere "caricatures assujetties à des règles de convention," "bouffissures prescrites" by special recipes particular to each country.³⁰ The truth of nature might be commonplace and squalid when badly "imitated," or else might seem shabby when confronted with the arbitrary and extra-natural character of all the extant "dramatic systems," which rest on versification, "poetic" modes of expression and idealized characterization.³¹ If so, so much the worse for the "systems." In his zeal for naturalism Diderot came near renewing the "poetic atheism" of the Cartesians, being saved from it only by its capacity to appreciate poetry archeologically, so to speak.³²

To keep to our main argument, Diderot no more abandoned his realistic conviction in the *Paradoxe* than he had done in *De la Poésie dramatique*, in which he had avowed that "il y a de la différence entre le plaisir de théâtre et le plaisir de société."³³ If there remain any doubt on this head it will be dispelled by the following portion of the *Paradoxe*, bearing on

³⁰ viii, 404.

³¹ Cf. Beaumarchais, *Essai sur le genre dram.* (1767), in *Théâtre complet*, ed. d'Heilly and Marescot, vol. I, p. 34.

³² Cf. the *Corresp. litt.* of Feb. 15, 1770 (viii, 460 ff.), in which Diderot seems to have lent his ideas to Grimm.

³³ vii, 363.

Philoctetes' admonition of Neoptolemus, as related by Sophocles, which conclusively shows that Diderot meant to remain faithful to "realism":

"Le Premier. — ...Y a-t-il dans ce discours autre chose que ce que vous adresseriez à mon fils, que ce que je dirais au vôtre?

Le Second. — Non.

Le Premier. — Cependant cela est beau.

Le Second. — Assurément.

Le Premier. — Et le ton de ce discours prononcé sur la scène différerait-il du ton dont on le prononcerait dans la société?

Le Second. — Je ne le crois pas.

Le Premier. — Et ce ton dans la société, y serait-il ridicule?

Le Second. — Nullement.

Le Premier. — Plus les actions sont fortes et les propos simples, plus j'admire" (viii, 406; cf. 420).

While Diderot felt the charm of Greek tragedy of simple, noble and stirring deeds, spontaneous in its genial inspiration and unhampered by those petty "*bienséances*" which are the lot of nations divided against themselves, he nevertheless believed that the "formule donnée par le vieil Eschyle,"²⁴ that "protocole de trois mille ans," was out of keeping with modern ways of thought and expression. Its recast by Racine and Voltaire, the system of the Comédie-Française, Diderot pronounced just "nothing." On the contrary,²⁵ no praise was too lavish for the "true" stage on which the actor, in his capacity of "lay preacher" and representative of the "philosophic poet," would be sure to sway "*les hommes de nature*," "*les hommes sensibles*," by means of the representation of pathetic spectacles, and to delight and instruct "*les têtes de glace*" with the faithful enactment of historical scenes. On this stage the actor could be at once himself and his personage without fear of violating ridiculous conventions and offending absurd proprieties; the good actor would be certain to please audiences in Paris as well as in London or

²⁴ viii, 372.

²⁵ viii, 392, 400. Cf. vii, 108; xix, 397.

Saint Petersburg;" no artificial specialization of histrionic talent would be required, all the skill and study of the actor being employed in the preservation of that "*unité de ton*" from which all esthetic blessings flow. Even the "*comédien sensible*" might show himself to advantage in the scenes (need we say these would abound in the theatre of the future?) calling for the display of virtuous emotions. He or his hard-headed colleagues might occasionally speak *ex tempore*," for they would no longer be held to the letter of the text. In short, the new stage would be "everything."

All told, far from prescribing that Nature and the Stage be kept apart for ever, Diderot conceived of his "ideal" and "imaginary" personages, the histrionic dæmons which the actor was to imitate, as anticipations of the very real and natural beings of a society that would harbor no prejudices whatsoever.²⁸ We may make use of his own simile to give a more concrete formulation to this idea:

"Mon ami [Diderot wrote in the *Paradoxe*] il y a trois modèles, l'homme de la nature, l'homme du poète, l'homme de l'acteur. Celui de la nature est moins grand que celui du poète, et celui-ci moins grand encore que celui du grand comédien, le plus exagéré de tous. Ce dernier monte sur les épaules du précédent, et se renferme dans un grand mannequin d'osier dont il est l'âme; il meut ce mannequin d'une manière effrayante, même pour le poète qui ne se reconnaît plus, et il nous épouvante....ainsi que les enfants s'épouvantent les uns les autres en tenant leurs petits pourpoints courts élevés au-dessus de leur tête, en s'agitant, et en imitant de leur mieux la voix rauque et lugubre d'un fantôme qu'ils contrefont" (viii, 419).

Diderot wished to relieve "*l'homme de nature*" of this double burden and to have him serve directly as "*l'homme du comédien*."

²⁸ Cf. viii, 344, 364, 394.

²⁹ Cf. vii, 105.

³⁰ Cf. also viii, 390, where the subsistential reality of the "ideal" is implied.

³¹ viii, 419. Cf. Beaumarchais in *Essai sur le genre dramatique* (1767), in *Théâtre complet*, ed. Heilly-Marescot, I, 36, 37.

It is evident that the advent of the natural stage was tantamount to a revolution. Though he does not use the word in the *Paradoxe*,⁴⁰ Diderot believed inevitable the revolution that was to usher the reign of Reason and Nature which called for the "true" theatre as its dramatic expression. This is the esoteric meaning of the *Paradoxe*, which is thus seen to be the esthetic counterpart of the contemporary *Rêve de d'Alembert* and *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, two of the most revolutionary books the world has ever seen. Diderot held that, because it was only partially adapted to its new social milieu, the old tragedy was doomed to extinction.⁴¹ Indeed for a moment Diderot thought himself the man who was destined to "quarter the hippogriff" of artistic conservatism. Drunk with joy at the success of his *Père de famille* (1769), he relished the dubious compliment of Duclos: "Trois pièces comme cela tueront la tragédie." "Qu'ils se fassent à ces émotions-là," he wrote to Mlle Volland, "et qu'ils supportent après cela s'ils peuvent, Destouches et La Chaussée."⁴² The sequel, which included a bare succès d'estime for his own *Fils naturel* (1771), may have convinced him that his expectations had been too sanguine. At any rate, we meet in the latest⁴³ additions to the *Paradoxe* those half-ironic counsels of caution and moderation, like the one we have quoted a few pages above, or his commendation for consistency of that portion of the public which refused to sanction such a horror as Gabrielle de Vergy's perceiving (in the play by Debelloy) her lover's bleeding heart in the poison cup from which she was about to drink.⁴⁴ Yet the uncertainty of public taste did not chill the revolutionary ardor of Diderot,⁴⁵ who held that it was worse than useless to compromise with the prevailing manifestations of art because the result of this compromise would be an incongruity. It merely inspired him with the determination to *écraser l'in-*

⁴⁰ The word and idea appear, however, in Grimm's *Corresp. litt.* (III, 357) in connection with *le Père de famille* (1757).

⁴¹ Cf. viii, 372; also Mercier, *Du Théâtre*, p. vii, viii (préface).

⁴² xix, 314, 320.

⁴³ About 1777.

⁴⁴ viii, 394.

⁴⁵ Diderot thought himself infallible as an esthetic prophet. (Cf. xix, 475, Dec. 3, 1765).

fâme, the political and economic system, of which the Maupeou parliament was the latest manifestation, and which was ultimately responsible for all evils, intellectual and artistic, no less than social."

Prose historical tragedy, defined as "une belle page historique qui se partage en un certain nombre de repos marqués," "was to be one of the instruments of the great social and artistic transformation. His *Régulus* and *Térentia* (1769-70)" satisfied Diderot's craving for the "épique et gigantesque" he associated with the Golden Age;" the realistic treatment of historical tragedy fulfilled the postulates of the theory of imitation; the stoicism of its heroes unmistakably resembled that of the "philosophers" and "lay preachers" of Encyclopedism who were preparing the nation for the Age of Reason and Nature when the radicals "were to have their turn."⁴⁰

Herein, too, Diderot went the way of his time and generation, though ahead of most of his contemporaries. The advent of prose historical drama had been prepared and aided by the interest in past history which began to be felt during the last years of the reign of Louis XV.⁴¹ Under its influence the stage was submerged under a flood of plays in historical settings, ranging from comic operas in the *genre troubadour* and comedies like Collé's *Partie de chasse de Henri IV* to full-fledged tragedies with a fresh tinge of historical color, like those which the Patriarch of Ferney contributed to the philosophic cause. In Voltaire's *Olympie* (given at the Comédie-

⁴⁰ Cf. letter to Wilkes, 14 Nov., 1771, in Cru, *Diderot*, p. 477; to Princess Dashkoff, April 3, 1771, xx, 28. Cf. also vi, 403 f. and Diderot's *Essai historique sur la police* published by Tourneux, *Diderot et Catherine II* (Paris, 1899), p. 91-138. It may be worth remembering that the war which the dramatic authors waged against the Comédiens du Roi in the seventies is part and parcel of the pre-revolutionary war on privilege. Cf. viii, 403 and the works of de Loménie on Beaumarchais, Bécларd on Mercier, Lenel on Marmontel, M. Pellisson, *Les hommes de lettres au xviiiè siècle* (Paris, 1911), ch. iv; etc.

⁴¹ viii, 395. Cf. also M. Tourneux, *Diderot et Catherine II*, p. 412.

⁴² Cf. viii, 406, 433.

⁴³ Cf. III, 481, etc.

⁴⁴ To Sartine, June, 1770; xx, 13.

⁴⁵ Cf. B. de la Villehervé, *Baculard d'Arnaud* (Paris, 1920), pt. 2, ch. 3; Gaiffe, *Le Drame en France* (Paris, 1910), pt. 3, ch. 4.

Française in 1764), in *les Scythes* (1767), in his "imperial and *bourgeoise*" tragedy of 1769, *les Guèbres* (the last two never played for obvious reasons), we witness a renewal of Diderot's influence, which had first appeared in Voltaire's "drama" of *Tancrède* (1759). All of these plays possessed the very Encyclopedic qualities of universality and propagandism:

"Le but du poète [Diderot wrote with reference to *les Guèbres*] est général. Il montre aux rois les suites funestes de l'intolérance; il prêche aux hommes le respect de la morale universelle; il les approche les uns des autres par le droit de fraternité qui les lie et que la diversité des opinions religieuses ne doit jamais rompre; il leur inspire le plus grand mépris pour ces opinions; il s'adresse à toutes les nations et à tous les temps à venir" (viii, 455 f.)

This is not strange since "il faut substituer partout les Français aux Romains, la Seine ou le Danube à l'Oronte, et les Chrétiens aux Guèbres ou Perses." Had not Rosenkranz⁵² written that the *Paradoxe* shows Diderot unaware of the war waged in the seventies by the Third Estate on the other two, it would not have been necessary to state that Diderot could not but be fully conscious of the political mission which the prose tragedy inherited from its poetic predecessor. What Diderot hid beneath his demand that the tragedy depict ideals of conduct (for he informs us in the *Paradoxe* as elsewhere that he did not aspire to the martyr's crown),⁵³ his disciples and partisans have expressed in words and deeds. Grimm dreamt of the time when "les théâtres deviendront un cours d'institutions politiques et morales et les poètes ne seront plus seulement des hommes de génie, mais des hommes d'état."⁵⁴ Even while Diderot was elaborating his *Paradoxe*, Mercier dilated upon "*la vraie tragédie*," "le drame neuf et vraiment philosophique" that was to serve "le poète législateur" as a "tribune aux harangues."⁵⁵ It is in the prose *genre* of *le Shérif*

⁵² Rosenkranz, *Diderot's Leben und Werke*, 2d ed., II, p. 214.

⁵³ viii, 356, 408; cf. xi, 84 and *Corr. litt.*, viii, 462.

⁵⁴ *Corresp. litt.*, viii, p. 80.

⁵⁵ S. Mercier, *Du théâtre* (1773). Cf. especially chapters xiii, xiv, xxi.

that Mercier wrote his "drama" of *Jean Hennuyer* (1772), the "drame héroïque," *Childéric Ier* (1774) and his "pièce nationale," *la Destruction de la Ligue* (1782), plays in which one discerned historical epitomes of national laws and mores—"un reflet des affaires qui agitent la nation," "la manière enfin dont nous envisagions le trône et la cour, et les révolutions qui en émanaient." And in the same *genre* was also that other "tragedy" illustrative of the doctrine of the Social Contract, the famous *Maillard ou Paris sauvé*, of Sedaine, received at the Comédie-Française in 1771 but never played there, not for fear that its success would deal the death-blow to the tragedy of Racine and Voltaire, as its author fondly imagined, but for the excellent reason that, in the words of Mercier, the accents of genuine tragedy can only be heard in the country in which those of liberty are not smothered.⁵⁶ The author of *les Éléuthéromanes* (1772)⁵⁷ could only give his approval to Mercier when the latter blurted out the confession that in the eyes of the philosophic *dramaturge*,

"....toutes les inégalités produites dans le gouvernement politique doivent disparaître....car s'il travaillait à resserrer ces liens malheureux il serait barbare et deviendrait le fauteur de la tyrannie. Il doit tendre au contraire, à rétablir l'égalité naturelle, parce que telle est la loi primitive fondée sur la constitution de la nature humaine" (Mercier, *Du théâtre*, p. 151).

Like most writings of Diderot, the *Paradoxe* is an appeal to action. Diderot's plea against feeling is in reality directed only against morbid and useless "sensibility,"⁵⁸ against the show of emotion that bears no relation to the circumstances

⁵⁶ L. Günther, *L'oeuvre dramatique de Sedaine*, p. 279 ff.

⁵⁷ ix, 9-19.

⁵⁸ vi, 206 (*Jacques le Fataliste*, 1773). There is also something to be said in favor of the opinion of Miss E. F. Jourdain, *Dramatic theory and practice in France, 1690-1808* (London, 1921), p. 78, 174, according to whom Diderot's play *Est-il bon, est-il méchant?* contains an undercurrent of satire upon *sensibilité*. To be sure, "sensibility" has been since decried as unpractical quite often and in works as discrepant as *Daphné* and *la Bataille de dames*.

that provoke it and is barren of pragmatic results. It is to this false *sensibilité* that Diderot ascribed the pernicious effects which Rousseau thought were the concomitants of dramatic representation." At the same time, and herein Diderot shows himself a disciple of the *grands classiques* and a precursor of Gautier," Flaubert and the neo-realists, he inveighed against those misguided sentimentalists—their tribe increased mightily in the seventies—who, because they thought themselves possessed of "sentiments" and "genius," felt they could dispense with the quest of beauty and with social duties." Incidentally, Diderot completed the task left unfinished by Rameau," since he carried out the doctrine of objectivism to an art which had been hitherto ignored by it, thus proving once more his ability to think consequently, which is so often denied him.

Called forth, in all likelihood, by the paradoxical attitude of the Rousseauians, who doted on the stage while decrying it," and of the pseudo-Classic psittacists, who prattled about truth and nature which they ignored in practice, the "paradox" of Diderot is the esthetic analogue to that of the socialist, who professes to oppose competition and individualism, the battle cries of his opponents, only to reaffirm them in what he calls a truer and higher sense. The "idealism" and "Academicism" of Diderot are but the "realism" of tomorrow. Like Kant, like Schiller," whose contrast of the "naïve" and "sentimental" enlarges upon and repeats the basic contradiction of the *Paradoxe*, Diderot held that the equilibrium between sensibility and understanding, destroyed by the lapse of man from the natural estate,

" Cf. Rousseau, *Discours* of 1750; *Lettre à d'Alembert*, etc.

" F. Luitz, *Die Aesthetik von Th. Gautier* (Freiburg, 1917?), p. 6 ff. Curiously enough, Barbey d'Aurevilly (*Goethe et Diderot*, Paris, 1880) ascribed this rôle to Goethe, whom he regarded as the very antithesis of Diderot.

" The *Paradoxe* thus marks the reaction against the current represented by d'Arnaud, de Tréogate, Restif de la Bretonne, the Shandyans and the sensualists of the school of Helvétius.

" V. Rameau's Letter to Houdar de la Motte, October 25, 1727. The parallelism with the *Paradoxe* is most striking.

" Rousseau, *Lettre sur les spectacles* (1758); *Nouvelle Héloïse*, 2e partie, lettre 17 (1761); *De l'imitation théâtrale* (1764).

" V. Basch, *La poétique de Schiller* (Paris, 1911), 2d ed., p. 6 ff.

was in part restored through the representation in art of an ideal world. "C'est surtout lorsque tout est faux qu'on aime le vrai, c'est surtout lorsque tout est corrompu que le spectacle est le plus épuré. Le citoyen qui se présente à l'entrée de la comédie y laisse tous ses vices pour ne les reprendre qu'en sortant."⁸ But he did not concede, with Mercier, the Rousseauian half of whom obscured the Diderotian,⁹ that in the Golden Age the virtuous and realistic theatre is to be a useless and harmful thing. Diderot rather resembles Fénelon¹⁰ in his vision of an Ideal Age, with an Ideal art, at the end of a period of social and artistic incubation. For he could not bear to think that Art might be permanently divorced from Nature and Society.

⁸ viii, 402. Cf. ii, 392, vii, 310, xi, 112; etc.

⁹ L. Béclard, *S. Mercier*, p. 175.

¹⁰ V. the paper of A. Cherel on "L'idée du 'naturel' et le sentiment de la Nature chez Fénelon," in *Rev. d'hist. litt.*, (1911), p. 810-826.

VITA

Anno 1888 Bucharestini, urbe Daciae, natus, primis ibi interfui scholis et lycealem, ut dicunt, testimonium adeptus sum. Deinde anno 1907 Novi Eboraci universitatem Columbiae adii, ubi studiis philologiae et philosophiae incubui scholasque audiui horum virorum optime de me meritorum: Ayres, Baldensperger, D. Bigongiari, H. C. Brown, Cattell, Cohen, Dewey, Fitzgerald, Gerig, Gottheil, A. V. W. Jackson, Lanson, Lawrence, Lovejoy, Montague, de Onis, Prince, Spiers, Sturtevant, E. Thorndike, Todd, Weeks, Woodbridge, Woodworth, Yo-hannan. Doctissimis illis viris gratias ago maximas. Apud universitatem Columbiae ad gradum Magistri in Artibus perveni a. 1909 post debitam adprobationem thesisi meae De a-prioritate spatii ac temporis in philosophia Kantiana. Hoc in Athenaeo officio praeceptoris linguarum Sarmaticarum functus sum (a. 1916), necnon tribus annis post praeceptor studiosis nondum matriculatis in literis nostrae aetatis Gallicis, Ibericis, Dacicis legi. Docui et in universitate Neoeboracensi, a. 1921-22. Tentamina, notas et adversaria nonnulla conscripsi quae edita sunt in Columbia University Quarterly, Romanic Review, Journal of Philosophy, etc.

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